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OTHERS TO ADORN

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OTHERS TO ADORN

by

OLIVER ST. JOHN GOGARTY

Preface by W. B. YEATS

Forewords by

A. E. [GEORGE RUSSELL]

and

HORACE REYNOLDS

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RICHARD CAMPBELL	}	COME ON!
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HORACE REYNOLDS		

P R E F A C E

[From Yeats's Introduction to the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, 1892-1935. Oxford Clarendon Press. Section V, page xv.]

"Twelve years ago Oliver Gogarty was captured by his enemies, imprisoned in a deserted house on the edge of the Liffey with every prospect of death. Pleading a natural necessity he got into the garden, plunged under a shower of revolver bullets and as he swam the ice-cold December stream promised it, should it land him in safety, two swans. I was present when he fulfilled that vow. His poetry fits the incident, a gay, stoical—no, I will not withhold the word—heroic song. Irish by tradition and many ancestors, I love, though I have nothing to offer but the philosophy they deride, swashbucklers, horsemen, swift indifferent men; yet I do not think that is the sole reason, good reason though it is, why I gave him considerable space, and think him one of the great lyric poets of our age."

THE POETRY OF MY FRIEND

WHEN I was young I thought of my opposites with terror, but as I grew older I transcended those hatreds, because, I hope, my mood became more spiritual. I came to feel the attraction in opposites, not that I wished to be like them but to understand them, to establish some harmony or balance between them and myself. I found this inclination in others more spiritual than myself. Emerson, who could not, I think, have brought his lips to utter a Rabelaisian sentence, does twice in his journal refer almost with envy to the Rabelaisian freedom of speech of the lumbermen. This attraction to opposites may have its roots in a purely spiritual impulse to have life in all fullness, and it may have been the same impulse which made him write to Whitman telling the poet what joy he took in his free and brave thought. I found myself liking Oliver Gogarty when I knew him only as having the wildest wit in Ireland from which nothing in heaven or earth was immune, though often I had reverence for the things he assailed. I never suspected in that rich nature a poet lay hidden, though my intuition should have told me that at the root of all friendships and desires are hidden identities. For all his rich vitality the elements obvious in it seemed incongruous with delicate

poetry. An athlete in his youth, an airman in later life, his mind thronged with the knowledge and technique of a specialist, his imagination brimful of Rabelaisian fantasy and that wild wit which in every poet but Heine has made timid the sensitive psyche.

All this was not congruous with poetry. But, among the multitudes he contained, there was a poet, a genie in the innermost who gradually emerged in spite of all the dragons in its path. I was astonished when he began to show us verses so finely carved that his genie seemed to have wrought with words as the Image-maker in his own verse treated the hard jade, making a transient beauty into adamant. It is easier to suggest a lovely transience than to carve it in definite forms. Monticelli in the blurred jewelry of his woodland could make glimmer a white arm, a gleaming neck, a gesture, a mothlike flutter of drapery, and leave it to our imagination to create the full riot of lovely life.

But the ideal of Oliver's genie was beauty and mystery achieved by precision. His beauty must shine in the sun not in a shade, and its mystery must be its own perfection. That I think is his genie's true intent in its art; but, when it consorts with the crowd of lusty incompatibles in the house of the soul, it is often deflected and becomes witty with the rest, or it listens to scandal and forgets for a time its own ideal. But I always assume that what is best is most real and I find what is best in lovely poems like *The Plum Tree by the House* in which the genie reveals to

the poet the manner of its own artistry, to hold fast to the image, to brood on its beauty until it becomes what it contemplates and is itself a blossoming tree. It is not the secret of such art as I have myself, for my genie would melt all forms into bodiless spirit. It looks with wonder on its opposite whose art is to project defined and shapely images and which gets its life from this art. That precise carving in words is in the first poem in this book, where the crab tree grows in the imagination with its stiff, twisted beauty, and, as we read, it becomes as sturdy a dweller in memory as its prototype in earth. Again in the *Coin from Syracuse* how determined the genie is to miss nothing of the hard drawing of the beauty it sees until the features

“Crowned with the thickly rolled
And corrugated gold”

are built anew in fancy with the curious hands

“lost
On the sweet Asian coast”

and then we know at last it was some Irish beauty had started the genie on its interpretation of the ancient image, some one

“Come of the old stock,
Lords of the limestone rock,
And acres fit to breed
Many a likely steed,

Straight in the back and bone
With head high like her own,
And blood that, tamed and mild,
Can suddenly grow wild."

When I was young and saw a face that set me dreaming I tried to track it back to the Pleroma, the fountain of all beauty, to find justification for my adoration. I had not then found in Emerson the wisdom which justifies the image-maker—

"Tell them, dear, if eyes were made for seeing,
That beauty is its own excuse for being,"

and I have become less timid and more gallant in my thought, accepting beauties not in my own hierarchy, and am happier being able to escape from myself and to see with the delighted, unfearing eyes of a poet who is my opposite.

Oliver Gogarty has eyes which can see what is most enchanting and alluring in women. He casts a glamour over them, the art which Gainsborough had in painting and which Reynolds, for all his mastery of his craft, had not. How few poets convey to us the enchantment of the women they adored. Their love blurs their art. I doubt if Oliver was in love with any of the women he praises, but, as we read, we feel that we could easily fall in love with the woman he depicts. His cool eye has noticed that second of illumination where the light on limb and dress becomes one with the light in the heart, and

he can have no peace until he can give that transience permanence—

“till the cloud
Of thought takes definite shape,
And bodies it forth unbowed,
Tall, on a bare landscape,
Where earth the stone upthrusts—
Holding your exquisite frock
Against the morning gusts,
And light is on half the rock.”

That is a beauty seen and drawn with precision enough to make it alluring to us. I sometimes think of Herrick after I have read one of Oliver Gogarty's lyrics. The Julia of the English poet is a lovely piece of girlhood. That is much, but she will never be more to our imagination. There is some aristocracy of vision in the Irish poet. He sees the lovely girl, but he suggests, however remotely, the psyche within the flesh. In an instant, she might be transfigured in the imagination and become the dream stuff out of which goddesses, naiads and nymphs were fashioned. That is, the images he depicts, however modern in outward fashion, are still in the divine procession and set us travelling with them to

“The Perfect, the Forbidden City,
That's built—Ah, God knows where.”

From practice the art of the poet, at first a little stiff, has become supple, and the words will fly up

wiftly to catch a sudden glory in their net. This must have come almost as swiftly as the vision it speaks of:

“I gaze and gaze when I behold
The meadows springing green and gold.
I gaze until my mind is naught
But wonderful and wordless thought!
Till, suddenly, surpassing wit,
Spontaneous meadows spring in it:
And I am but a glass between
Un-walked in meadows, gold and green.”

I take so much pleasure in my friends' poetry because it is the opposite to my own. It gives to me some gay and gallant life which was not in my own birthright. He is never the professional poet made dull by the dignity of recognised genius. He has never made a business of beauty: and, because he is disinterested in his dealings with it, the Muse has gone with him on his walks and revealed to him some airs and graces she kept secret from other lovers who were too shy or too awed by her to laugh and be natural in her presence.

A. E.

GOGARTY IN THE FLESH

BY HORACE REYNOLDS

I FIRST met Oliver Gogarty in George Moore's *Salve* where he is introduced as Dublin's arch-mocker, the author of the limericks that are on the lips of all Dublin. And in Dublin, most vocal of all cities, where talk is the national art and pastime, it means much to be the crowned arch-ollave of joke and jest. In *Salve* the wicket of Moore's garden clangs, and Gogarty makes his gay entrance fanfared by Moore who cries out in welcome Gogarty's motif, "There was a young man of St. John's," the first line of one of the great limericks, slyly leaving the following lines to our curiosity, and thus confounds the censor, for much of Gogarty's wit necessarily bubbles in secret springs. But he gives complete Gogarty's improvisation on Sir Thornley Stoker, the Dublin surgeon, whose excursions into the suburbs of art were made possible by his skill with the scalpel, his antiquarian touch turning a cancer into a Chippendale sofa or a floating kidney into a Ming Cloisonné. And with the laughter that his sallies arouse in Moore's dinner guests Gogarty fades out of the Trilogy, a beautifully realised minor character.

My curiosity was excited. A. E. and John Eglinton, Moore's other guests, were identifiable, but who was

this man whose volatile and grotesque name seemed the mirror of his mind? Like Max Beerbohm in *Enoch Soames*, I went unrewarded to the index of a literary history, Ernest Boyd's *Ireland's Literary Renaissance*, a book that had stood me in good stead in my first flirtings with the literature of the Renaissance. Evidently Boyd in his perhaps too earnest quest for the meaning of Ireland's literature had had no time for personalities: he had been interested only in the written, not the spoken, word. Finally in my copy of *Dana*, a rare early journal, I found printed some of Gogarty's lyrics—the Goddess speaking where the critic was mute—and fresh surprise was added to my already aroused curiosity: this man whose wit was as Gothic as a gargoyle wrote lyrics cool and fresh as a fountain, and as delicate as a beautiful change of light.

Later when *Ulysses* fell into my hands, and it was whispered to me that Gogarty was in it, I recognised him in "stately, plump Buck Mulligan" who comes "from the stairhead bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed" to open that tragedy of the unconscious, although Gogarty is not plump, and stately, perhaps, only in repose. There in that book without reticences Gogarty piled imagination upon imagination with breath-taking invention, and I knew enough of Joyce's marvellous phonographic ear and photographic eye to know that much of it was but Gogarty printed, and I marvelled anew.

Three years passed, and it so happened that each year I met an Irish poet who had known Gogarty: Joseph Campbell, James Stephens, and Padraic Colum passed in succession through the city in which I lived, and from each I gleaned something of the famous Dublin doctor. To ask of him was to evoke a legend: his name was open sesame to the treasure-house of Gogartiana in which each one who knew him seemed to have a full share. "He does not belong to our spindling, self-nauseated age," cried Campbell; "he is a Buck of the robust, devil-may-care 18th century, born out of time to our delight," Campbell's slower, Northern blood standing momentarily still in homage before the memory of a mind which was lightning. And then to illustrate the quickness of Gogarty's wit he told how as a young poet he had walked down Grafton Street one day, proud of a new, very bright red tie. Suddenly he came face to face with Gogarty. "Tiger! Tiger! burning bright," cried Gogarty instantly, passing on with a swift smile and a bright nod. And I shall never forget Stephens' praise of one of Gogarty's poems, *To a Cock*, in a series of mounting phrases which exploded like a rocket in a vehement "By God, 'tis tragic!" while we all looked at each other in wild surprise. Colum told us of Gogarty's adventures before he had hung up his tankard in stories which ranged from his pilgrimage to the top of the Feather-bed Mountain to restore the snakes to Ireland to his offering of the swans to the Liffey, a gesture of

gratitude to that river which, when he had been taken out by a group of Republicans to be shot, had offered him the opportunity to escape with his life. We gasped at the audacity of those stories in which man revenges himself on those two great barriers that lie athwart the highway of the mind and keep it active—sex and religion. Our pulses beat to the limericks that immortalise in oral tradition such oddly assorted personalities as the King in Sing a Song of Sixpence; Miss Horniman, patron saint of the Abbey Theatre; and Daniel O’Connell, the Irish patriot. We applauded the skill of the parodies that transubstantiates sound and senses as skilfully as Joyce, with that passion for phonetic waggery which is so large a part of *Ulysses* and the Irish mind, turned *Oliver Gogarty* into *Malachi Mulligan*, keeping the two dancing dactyls and the clash of race and mood in given name and surname. And I shall always remember one occasion in particular which Gogarty ruled superbly by proxy, transforming what might well have been just another dinner into an evening of almost Dublin brilliance. Among others, Colum was there, and Maurice Joy, once secretary to Sir Horace Plunkett, and a friend of Gogarty’s youth. Scarcely had we seated ourselves when someone spoke of Gogarty, and then Colum and Joy began an antiphony of Gogartian reminiscences; first one, then the other, would remember one of Gogarty’s limericks, stories, or parodies, and these quotations intoxicated, like a succession of

drinks. Then when we were all a little giddy with excitement and delight, Joy arose to recite Gogarty's *The Death of Diogenes, the Doctor's Dog*, which is both a lampoon on the tongue-tied, king-loving Professor Mahaffy and a parody of Swinburne, written, when Gogarty was an undergraduate at Trinity, in the quintains that close the *Atalanta in Calydon*. I can hear Joy now chanting the lines that Mahaffy speaks over the body of the dog which had died on the voyage from Greece to Ireland, a hound especially prized because it had been given him by the niece of the King of Greece:

As I wambled awound
On the gwound that was Gweece
I was given that hound
By the King's little niece,
And had rather be fined e'er I found him to
gaze on his saddest surcease.

And then the Chorus of Scholars in the house comments gravely on the action, with a deeper tone, *adagio pesante*:

He was given that hound
By the seed of a King
For the wisdom profound
Of his wide wandering.
But was it the owner, or donor, or dog that
was led by a string?

As Joy spoke the last words of this threnody I made my vow. I would make a pilgrimage to Dublin. I had not seen Shelley plain, but I would at least catch a glimpse of Gogarty in the flesh.

Two months later I found myself one afternoon before a door in which was set a large silver plate bearing the name *Oliver St. John Gogarty, M.D.* Before ringing the bell, I looked about me. This was a moment of which I had long dreamed; it was not to be hurried over; I wanted to squeeze every possible value out of it, roll it around in the mouth, taste it to the full. At last I was in Ely Place. Across the street was the row of houses from the windows of one of which, Number 4, George Moore, surrounded by his Monets and Manets and lovingly treading his Aubusson carpet, had looked forth and seen the copy for his masterpiece, *Hail and Farewell*. At the end of the street rose the often-spoken-of convent wall, for Ely Place is a cul-de-sac; between it and Gogarty's house stretched the sunken garden through the wicket of which Gogarty had first walked into my mind. There was the largest apple tree in all Ireland under which Moore, an Ovid among his friends, had dined; there was the damson tree, "coral boughs in light inurned," of which Gogarty himself was later to sing in one of his most beautiful lyrics.

I rang the bell, I waited, I was ushered into the house, I was conducted to the drawing-room. Dr. Gogarty was engaged with a patient. And as I waited for him, I chatted with Mrs. Gogarty and some com-

pany. Mrs. Gogarty politely asked me about my stay in Ireland, and I summarised my trip up from Queenstown by way of Killarney to Dublin, mentioning, apropos of something I have now forgotten, that Muckross Abbey was the most beautiful ruin I had seen in Ireland.

“Ah, you should see ——— ———,” said a gay, joyous voice behind me, speaking of a famous Irish woman to whose beauty time has not been kind, and I turned to see coming toward me, eyes laughing, step quick, all smile and gaiety and good spirits, a very young middle-aged man—Oliver St. John Gogarty in the flesh. I knew at once that I should like him much; in fact I already loved him for that entrance, with its flash of the precious power to perceive the hidden nearness of analogies seemingly distant until the imagination has discovered their essential closeness, a power that has given his friends many surprises and much pleasure. It was perfect, that entrance, well worth coming three thousand miles to see and hear.

We admired Gogarty's new Danish furniture purchased in Paris at the recent exhibition. Unlike Sir Thornley Stoker, Gogarty esteems the new, the fresh, the modern. President Cosgrave came in, a quiet, sober man who—unlike most Irishmen—did not want the centre of the stage. He talked little, and, I fear, I listened less. What were presidents to me? I sat finally in the presence of the man who had restored the snakes to Ireland; the author of the

great limericks; the creator of that robustious company, Fresh Nelly, Mrs. Mack, Rosalie the Coal-Quay Whore, and the heroic and Rabelaisian Bryan O'Lynn; the cunning "makaris" of the cleverest parody in English literature in which Gogarty flashes back to Keats, "Silent, upon a peak in Darien," "Potent, behind a cart with Mary Ann"—certainly the most joyously witty man in all Europe.

And as if he sensed my three-thousand-mile expectancy, Dr. Gogarty talked brilliantly, telling story after story with the ejaculatory running comment and extemporaneous exegesis of anecdote and phrase which are his habit, as is his raised finger, shaken Puck-like close to the ear. I believe he is the only man in the world who can explain his own jokes and make them funnier thereby, I thought, studying him as he talked.

Youth is the first impression one gets from Gogarty in the flesh—all the Irish seem youthful, but Gogarty is particularly so; youth, and the responsiveness of mind and body that is its privilege. He is a man whose energy makes him restless, whose culture and information are rich and abundant, close to the tip of his tongue, ready for instant mobilisation in the face of opening, invitation, or attack. His is a mind whose surfaces are intensely active, but whose depths are seldom stirred; a fluent, ready mind, flaring up easily into images and analogies, expressing itself from the surface, never pulling an idea up by its

roots, never working against resistance; a mind that plays like a fine old violin, from which tone comes singingly.

At seven o'clock the next morning—this in a city where the shops do not open until ten—Gogarty was at the door of my hotel with a small car, and we drove out into the beautiful Dublin hills. The small roadster had no brakes, and we slithered down the steep wet hills around which the road curved in dangerous spirals. Driving under those circumstances would have absorbed all my attention but not Gogarty's. For him it was only stimulation. All the while Gogarty gave me his memories of the poets, Greek, Latin, Scotch, English, and Irish, reciting whole ballads while we slid over the wet hills, ballads ranging from Robin Hood to an eighteenth-century folk ballad picked up by Joyce in Mabbot Street. Through Powerscourt Demesne we tore, finally coming to a stop in a beautiful quiet glade surrounded by old trees and backed by a high cliff down which a waterfall fell in thin hairs of silver. There we got out. Were Gogarty's spirits quieted by the gentle genius of this place? Not at all. At his command we ran foot races to restore circulation, and Gogarty bested me by no mean margin in the standing broad jump, and he would have easily bested a better man than I. Then back to the car, I breathless, but Gogarty unwinded, and then a drive to the lodge of a house where I was to have luncheon. There he left me exhausted in mind and body, while

he, with a gay wave of the hand, sped on his way back to Dublin, as fresh and unwearied as when we had set out five hours before.

The next morning at the same hour Gogarty was again at the door of my hotel; this time we were to go horseback riding. As we rode our cobs slowly through the almost deserted Dublin streets on our way to the Strand, we passed the house where Joyce used to lodge, and the sight of it loosed Gogarty's memories of the author of *Ulysses*. He paid tribute to Joyce's marvellous memory; he spoke of his beautiful tenor voice, even more beautiful than McCormack's; and, of course, of *Ulysses*, which he compared to "an elbow of a broken statue which is the town of Dublin". I remembered that to George Moore Dublin was an old second-hand clothes shop, and suggested that if we combined the two images, clothing one with the other, we'd have a museum scarecrow, a bit of foolish fancy that Gogarty generously rewarded with the high, suspiratory "Lovely!" which is the highest mark of his appreciation.

Soon we were on the Strand and off for a fine gallop around the crescent-shaped beach which fringes the east of Dublin as the mountains fence the west and south. The thunder of eight hooves on wet sand was as joyous as Gogarty's galloping wit, for unlike Joyce, whose wit depresses and saddens, Gogarty is as exhilarating as a gay band playing spiritedly in four-four time in the morning sunshine. Joyce

believes in nothing outside himself; consequently he can never rid self of self; he is devoured by the swarm of his ideas, and yet he feeds on them, and on them alone, and thus the heart-withering circle closes, shutting out the vistas that free man from unhappiness. Gogarty believes in the magnificent adventure of life which, like Taillefer, he charges with ardour, juggling his sword, a feather in his cap, a song on his lips.

And then one week-end we set off to the West. To drive with Gogarty in his small roadster had been a terrifying experience, but when I saw before his door the shell-shaped Mercedes in which we were to make our dash to the West, all yellow hood and mahogany trimmings, shiningly sinister—when I imagined the potential power that now lay quiet under that hood, I shuddered. The John McCormacks stopped in unexpectedly for tea—the tenor, wife, and daughter—and that delayed us, so it was after six when we started.

All my life I had lived in what we think of as a speed-crazed country. I had seen my share of the speed that is born of gasoline and gin, but never had I had such a ride. Gogarty had said, "You'll see the country". Well I did, in blurs. Getting out of Dublin, the motor coughed and spit. "It doesn't run well under fifty," said Gogarty apologetically; "I have to drive it on the brake." Driving on the brake consisted of seventy to eighty miles an hour down the straight-aways of the very narrow, very curving, but very

smooth Irish roads; at the curves, foot raised from accelerator, a consequent checking of our terrific speed, an anxious peering around the bend and a prayer that we might not find there in the road before us a peasant and a herd of cows. Then the foot down again on the accelerator and a resultant surging forward of the long yellow hood into the next straightaway.

And how Gogarty loved it! Leaning his head over so that his mouth might be close to my ear, taking his hand off the wheel to shake his finger coyly past his ear, Gogarty talked.

He remembered his student days at Trinity College, Dublin, under that trio of extraordinary professors, Mahaffy, Tyrrell, and Dowden. He quoted the remark Tyrrell made after Mahaffy had been suspended from preaching in the college chapel for his attempt to exalt the Greek Gods over the Christian: "Since Mahaffy gave up preaching in the chapel I suffer from insomnia at the services", his mimicry of Tyrrell's high, Oxford-accented voice making the remark much funnier than it is in cold print. He spoke of the many personalities with which Dublin bristled a generation ago, of Zozimus who, with a name like a Renaissance scholar in *us*, walked about Dublin in cricket costume, a strolling satire of the English game; who, although he knew Dublin like a book, insisted on finding his way home by compass. He told of the days when he and Joyce and Trench (Trench is Haines in *Ulysses*) lived together in the

Martello tower that Gogarty rented for nine pounds a year. He told of how they objected to a British warship which was anchored off shore so as to interfere with their view, wrote a protest to the British Admiralty, and had the ship removed. And thus passed the lovely fragrant Midlands, Padraic Colum's country, and before I knew it, we drew up before the Spanish Gate in Galway town, our first stop.

From there on the country was lovely, Lough Corrib on our right and straight ahead the beautiful Maumturk Mountains in the closing hour of the long Irish twilight. In an unbelievably short time we drew up at the Leenane Hotel, two hundred odd miles in little more than two hundred minutes, where I got out of the car feeling as if I had been shot across Ireland on a projectile.

The next day we drove from Leenane through Salruck to a point from which we could see the Mweelrea Mountains across Killary Harbour, where we talked to peasants who looked, as Gogarty said, "not only Pre-Celtic but Pre-Anything". Then back to Leenane and on to Letterfrack where we saw the ruins of Gogarty's old house, now re-risen Phoenix-like as the Renvyle House Hotel from the pile of ashes to which the Republicans reduced it during the Civil War. And if you stay at the Renvyle House Hotel to-day, someone is sure to tell you that it was the former home of a man who is in *Ulysses*. From Renvyle we went on to Loch Tully, where Gogarty

has an island on which he was building a new summer place. Although the house was still under construction, Gogarty was already planning how he might alight near it in a seaplane from Dublin.

On our way back from the West we turned south at Galway to visit Kinvarra for a glimpse of the Norman castle Gogarty had bought there with the idea of later restoring it, and our visit surprised an Irish peasant who, to Gogarty's dismay, was stabling his horse in the tower built by the Normans four hundred years before Spenser lived in and absorbed the Irish landscape. When we got out to look inside the tower, Gogarty stopped before it and raised his right hand in the Indian-How-like gesture which he and all Dublin use to signify that what is to follow is a quotation from William Butler Yeats himself. " 'The Normans had form, Gogarty, the Normans had form,' were Yeats's words when I showed him my tower," said Gogarty. And then as we walked up the stairs of the tower, its four sides oriented to the four points of the compass, Gogarty spoke of Yeats.

Gogarty is delightful on the subject of Yeats, his attitude toward his famous fellow-townsmen being compounded of reverence for his genius, delight in his foibles, gratitude for his kindness, and appreciation of the subtle mummer Yeats can be. Gogarty loves to peer into the folds of Yeats's mind, and he loves particularly to excite him to action. And Yeats, of course,

plays up. "I decided to take Yeats swimming," said Gogarty, "but in order to stir Yeats out of dream into action, I must appeal to his imagination. So I talked of the swimming match of Beowulf and Breca; of Swinburne's love of mixing with 'the great sweet mother', 'Clothed with the green and crowned with the foam'; of Byron's fondness for bathing in the jasper sea. And his imagination thus excited, Yeats reluctantly agreed to go. We got into my car and set off, but as we approached the sea, Yeats's resolution began to weaken:

Yeats (after a mile or two, in a chant-like voice to the accompaniment of faint strains from a psaltery hidden under the hood of the car). Gogarty, I'm afraid I can't go in bathing: I've forgotten to bring a suit.

Gogarty. I thought you would; I have two.

Yeats (after another mile). Gogarty, I'm afraid I can't go bathing: I have forgotten to bring a towel.

Gogarty. I thought you would; I have two.

When we got to the beach I gave Yeats a suit and towel, put his pince-nez in my pocket, and we bathed in the jasper sea.

But Gogarty was not so successful in getting Yeats on horseback. "I knew," said Gogarty, "that if I could get Yeats on a horse I could put a new rhythm into English lyric verse." And so he began to speak of the noble and benevolent Marcus Aurelius, who rides in bronze on the Capitoline Hill; of Chiron, wise tutor of Jason and Achilles; and of the Centaurs,

who thundered headlong down the roadway of excess—surrounding horseback riding with the tradition that Yeats loves to see about the things he does and thinks of. Again Yeats succumbed, but this time Mrs. Yeats put her foot down. New rhythm or no, she was not going to allow her famous husband to get on a horse.

As we passed through Enfield or Kilcock, I forget which, we were stopped by the sharp whistle of a policeman. We were doing fifty through the village square, but it wasn't for speeding that we had been stopped, primarily, Kevin O'Higgins, Minister of Justice, had been murdered that noon, and the police were questioning all cars. "I am Senator Oliver Gogarty," said Gogarty, mentally assuming the toga; "can I be of help?" He couldn't, and we proceeded on to Dublin.

This past Spring—six years later—I saw him again. He was the same Gogarty, running down the steps of the Statler Hotel to greet me when I came to take him to his Harvard lecture, talking all the way to Cambridge in the automobile, overflowing with anecdote and comment on the life he had encountered in the lecture tour which had taken him from coast to coast full of fresh thought and fresh enthusiasms. For Gogarty's intellectual capital is in rapid circulation, culture is for him an adventure—the discovery in an obscure Elizabethan poet of the wonderful line, "He grasped at love and filled his arms with bays," the epitome of the life of many a

poet; the rescue of some fine ringing sentence with the sound of smitten bronze in it, from a medical treatise; the return to the world of a beautiful old Scotch song, hidden like a violet among the weeds of much that has been deservedly forgotten in an obsolete anthology; the perception in *Old Man River* of a microcosm of life concealed from most of us by the film of familiarity. Of course he had a new story about Yeats; baffled by Mrs. Yeats's watchfulness in his plan to put Yeats upon a horse, he had succeeded in taking him up in his plane, for Gogarty is now a licensed pilot and, the Mercedes garaged, he now wings his way to the West, singing, like the beautiful Swan-Children of Lir. He had taken up A. E., too, but that had necessitated a new safety strap—"the ordinary strap was too small for the God".

Gogarty was, as always, a delight to all who saw and heard him, his modesty endearing him to those who could only partially appreciate his wit, the heaven-sent modesty that goes hand in hand with the shyness with which in his poetry he broods on Beauty, fearful that someone may surprise him on his knees before her shrine. Almost daily his poetry grows more gay and arch, more musical in its tune, swifter and surer in its choriambic dance, more beautiful in its expression of the delights Nature offers to the inviting eye. Sometimes in his verse that rare marriage of wit and beauty is so perfect as to make us regret all the more the occasions when

the wit, laughing, banishes the beauty, bruising a rhythm and breaking a mood that have given us great joy. But gradually, and with all the sureness of Nature, the poet emerges from the chrysalis of the wit. By his poetry will the many of the future know the essence of a personality which, in the flesh, has been the wonder of the few.

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SHAPES OF EARTH AND SKY

THE CRAB TREE

HERE is the crab tree,
Firm and erect,
In spite of the thin soil,
In spite of neglect.
The twisted root grapples
For sap with the rock,
And draws the hard juice
To the succulent top:
Here are wild apples,
Here's a tart crop!

No outlandish grafting
That ever grew soft
In a sweet air of Persia,
Or safe Roman croft;
Unsheltered by steading,
Rock-rooted and grown,
A great tree of Erin,
It stands up alone,
A forest tree spreading
Where forests are gone.

Of all who pass by it
How few in it see
A westering remnant
Of days when Lough Neagh
Flowed up the long dingles
Its blossom had lit,

Old days of a glory
Time cannot repeat;
And therefore it mingles
The bitter and sweet.

It takes from the West Wind
The thrust of the main;
It makes from the tension
Of sky and of plain,
Of what clay enacted,
Of living alarm,
A vitalised symbol
Of earth and of storm,
Of Chaos contracted
To intricate form.

Unbreakable wrestler!
What sapling or herb
Has core of such sweetness
And fruit so acerb?
So grim a transmitter
Of life through mishap,
That one wonders whether
If that in the sap
Is sweet or is bitter
Which makes it stand up.

WITH A COIN FROM SYRACUSE

WHERE is the hand to trace
The contour of her face:
The nose so straight and fine
Down from the forehead's line;

The curved and curtal lip
Full in companionship
With that lip's overplus,
Proud and most sumptuous,

Which draws its curve within,
Swelling the faultless chin?
What artist knows the technique of the Doric neck:

The line that keeps with all
The features vertical,
Crowned with the thickly rolled
And corrugated gold?

The curious hands are lost
On the sweet Asian coast,
That made the coins enwrought,
(Fairer than all they bought)

With emblems round the proud
Untroubled face of god
And goddess. Or they lie
At Syracuse hard by

The Fountain Arethuse.
Therefore from Syracuse
I send this face to her
Whose face is lovelier,

Alas, and as remote
As hers around whose throat
The curving fishes swim,
As round a fountain's brim.

It shows on the reverse
Pherenikos the horse;
And that's as it should be:
Horses she loves, for she

Is come of the old stock,
Lords of the limestone rock,
And acres fit to breed
Many a likely steed,

Straight in the back and bone,
With head high, like her own,
And blood that, tamed and milc
Can suddenly go wild.

PORTRAIT WITH BACKGROUND

DERVORGILLA's supremely lovely daughter,
Recalling him, of all the Leinstermen Ri,
Him whose love and hate brought o'er the water
Strongbow and Henry;

Brought rigid law, the long spear and the horsemen
Riding in steel; and the rhymed, romantic, high line;
Built those square keeps on the forts of the Norsemen,
Still on our sky-line.

I would have brought, if I saw a chance of losing
You, many more—we are living in War-rife time—
Knights of the air and the submarine men cruising,
Trained through a lifetime;

Brought the implacable hand with law-breakers,
Drilled the Too-many and broken their effrontery;
Broken the dream of the men of a few acres
Ruling a country;

Brought the long day with its leisure and its duty,
Built once again the limestone lordly houses—
Founded on steel is the edifice of Beauty,
All it avows is.

Here your long limbs and your golden hair affright
men,
Slave are their souls, and instinctively they hate them,

Knowing full well that such charms can but invite
men,
Heroes to mate them.

Eyes of the green of the woods that maddened
Tristram!

Fair skin and smooth as the rosy-footed dove's wing!
Who would not fight, if he saw you, against this
trammelling of Love's wing?

Aye; and bow down, if he saw but half the vision,
I dare not call to the mind's eye, to adore you;
And be, if that great light shone with precision,
Awestruck before you.

NON DOLET

OUR friends go with us as we go

Down the long path where Beauty wends,
Where all we love forgathers, so

Why should we fear to join our friends?

Who would survive them to outlast

His children; to outwear his fame—
Left when the Triumph has gone past—
To win from Age, not Time, a name?

Then do not shudder at the knife

That Death's indifferent hand drives home,
But with the Strivers leave the Strife,
Nor, after Cæsar, skulk in Rome.

VIRGIL

FROM Mantua's meadows to Imperial Rome
Came Virgil, with the wood-light in his eyes,
Browned by the suns that round his hillside home
Burned on the chestnuts and the ilices.
And these he left, and left the fallows where
The slow streams freshened many a bank of thyme,
To found a city in the Roman air,
And build the epic turrets in a rhyme.
But were the woodland deities forgot,
Pan, Sylvan, and the sister nymphs for whom
He poured his melody the fields along?
They gave him for his faith a happy lot:
The waving of the meadows in his song
And the spontaneous laurel at his tomb.

GOLDEN STOCKINGS



GOLDEN stockings you had on
In the meadow where you ran;
And your little knees together
Bobbed like pippins in the weather,
When the breezes rush and fight
For those dimples of delight,
And they dance from the pursuit,
And the leaf looks like the fruit.

I have many a sight in mind
That would last if I were blind;
Many verses I could write
That would bring me many a sight.
Now I only see but one,
See you running in the sun,
And the gold-dust coming up
From the trampled buttercup.

P O R T R A I T

[Diana Clothed]

Who would have thought
That your mottled and your speckled,
Wavering and dappled,
Leaf-brown costume in the light,
Held at the shoulder
By an orchid's freckled anther,
Covering a bosom of an interrupted white,
Was but the pelt
That the Maiden, the Resistless,
Light of Heel, the Huntress,
Yes; the tall Toxophilite,
Skinned in the brakes
From a slowly dying panther,
Shot in the brakes
By her fatal arrow's flight?—
Nothing to do with a merciful mild amice;—
Too well I know, and it needs no second sight!
Ah, now I know;
I should long ago have guessed it
From your way who wear it,
It is nothing more than this:
Cruelty clings to it—
It is nothing but the chlamys
Covering, and showing up
The breast of Artemis!

THE WAVELESS BAY

[Kiltymon]

I CLOSE my eyes to hold a better sight,
And all my mind is opened on a scene
Of oaks with leaves of amber in the green,
A mist of blue beneath them: to the right
A long cape fades beyond the azurite
Of one calm bay to which the pastures lean.
The rounded fields are warm, and in between
The yellow gorse is glaring stiff and bright.
It matters little what distraction drives
Clouds through my mind and breaks the outer day.
For all I know that distant water strives
Against the land. I have it all my way:
Through budding oaks a steadfast sun survives:
Peace on the fading cape, the waveless bay.

NYMPHIS ET FONTIBUS

SOLDIER of Rome, well trained and hard,
Who dwelt in Britain once and warred,
With no outlandish creed to mar
The stern salvation of the war.

Strong in yourself, you bore your care,
Your soul was like your camp, four-square;
And uncomplaining, iron shod,
Marched with Rome's honour for your god.

No bigot! In barbarian lands,
Roman where Rome no longer stands,
This altar to your hard-won love:
Earth, and the Nymphs and Springs thereof.

THE PHŒNIX

WAKEFUL, I saw my window sashed
With silver light before sunrise,
When, suddenly, the Phoenix flashed
A rainbow streak across the skies;
And it was gone before I said:

The Phoenix! In a book I read
The night before, I learnt to trace
That marvel to the happy place
It flies in, neither linde nor lawn
Of Earth, but in the Groves of Dawn.

There are so many things, the sight
Goes clean through as it were X-ray;
The finer things that hide in light,
Or in the heaven, that one might say,
Invisible, but we who know
How heedlessly the sight can go,
Employ the mind's eye but to find
That we are marvellously blind.

There are so many things that I
Could see that now seem to be hid,
I feel that they would crowd the sky
If I but lifted up a lid;
Or sang a song, or gave a shout,
That I would see them standing out:
But, as it is, what have I done
With all I've seen under the sun?

The Spring that comes before the Spring
And waits while boughs are thin and bare,
A deepened light, a quickening,
Annunciation in the air,
Delights me more, though cold and brief,
Than buds abounding, and the leaf.

And then the silver isles out far
On leaden edge of Eastern seas,
Beneath a dappled sky, which are
Our daily lost Atlantides,
A moment seen, and they are gone.
Bright archipelagos of dawn
Are more to me, and solider,
Than the near hills which never stir.

But would there be this seeking for,
This wistful straining after things:
Islands surmised from lines of shore,
Unless within me there were wings,
Wings that can fly in, and belong
Only to realms revealed by song,
That bring those realms about their nest,
Merging the Seeker and the Quest?

They beat in faintly purple air;
Beneath them rise autumnal trees;
But Autumn's colours usher there
A Spring which is Eternity's,

A Spring which overtakes the fruit,
Till blossoms crown the fond pursuit.
And there is neither Time nor Space
Within that paradisal place;
Nor separating length and breadth;
With Love identical is Death;
And no more fearful in that grove
Is Death to those who dwell than Love.

Not in our East then, but in verse,
The far-seen flashing feather flies,
In Groves of Dawn whose wells immerse
The star that lights and leads the Wise.
But rare's the book that holds the Word
That moves the uncompanioned Bird
To shake the air, and, in its flight,
Rain down the variegated light
That makes all timeless, and transforms
Unmagical and ageing norms;
And, when it falls upon, renews
The full blue eye, the twinkling thews,
And makes again the heart of man
Ageless and epinikian.

TO THE LADY —

[Who acted Queen Elizabeth for the Screen]

STRANGE that you should have acted Gloriana
Who rule us in more spacious days, Diana!
She was the imperfect morning in which you
To the perfection of this full day grew,
So moted with your glory that we are
The lit companions of your blazing star
That makes our NOW the noon-day of all time,
And puts sweet flesh upon the limbs of rhyme
To sing the harvest of Creation home.
To what enchanted margin have we come?
Why is your spell not fragile? Can it last?
Beauty was all too brittle in the past;
And long in one place Joy has never been;
Nor without danger Artemis was seen.

I poise my wings and stand on the blue air
(Little the dangerous for danger care),
With sharpened beak and eyes that never blink,
To pounce on Beauty on Destruction's brink.
Where do you lead? And what unguessed at coast
Will echo with your fame when we are gone?
What lands will dream of Beauty modelled on
That which we gaze at till our eyes grow dim?
I cannot see your equal, much less limn
Her features who will dare to evening lands
Bring back your crescent lids, your lips, your hands,

And distillation of distinguished words
Which drop as slow as honey out of gourds:
"It was no dream": I heard them, well they might
Assure me no enchantment lured the sight!

But lest one think to feel your very breath
When we are lying in the gap of death,
I sing and say to all who then may be:
What they behold is but your effigy,
An aberration out of Beauty's path,
Pretender in Perfection's aftermath!
Where are the regal tresses of dull gold,
The strange vert eyes so steady and so cold,
The body carried to an inward tune
As if the Graces had become triune?
Nor would we rise, nor have a voice recall
Us who in brave days loved the original.

K I N G D O M S

THE sailor tells the children
His stories of the sea,
Their eyes look over the water
To where his wonders be:

The flowers as big as teacups,
The great big butterflies,
The long unfooted beaches
Where stored-up treasure lies.

More than a thousand islands
Each curved around its pool:
All kingdoms filled with sunlight,
Where no one goes to school;

The fish that leave the water
In sudden bends of light;
The birds as blue as china;
The flies that gleam by night . . .

Till, slowly, I remember
A wistful place; and then—
The story of that Kingdom
First told to long-shoremen.

O BOYS! O BOYS!

O BOYS, the times I've seen!
The things I've done and known!
If you knew where I have been,
Or half the joys I've had,
You never would leave me alone;
But pester me to tell,
Swearing to keep it dark,
What . . . but I know quite well:
Every solicitor's clerk
Would break out and go mad;
And all the dogs would bark!

There was a young fellow of old
Who spoke of a wonderful town,
Built on a lake of gold,
With many a barge and raft
Afloat in the cooling sun,
And lutes upon the lake
Played by such courtesans . . .
The sight was enough to take
The reason out of a man's
Brain; and to leave him daft,
Babbling of lutes and fans.

The tale was right enough:
Willows and orioles,
And ladies skilled in love:
But they listened only to smirk,

For he spoke to incredulous fools,
And, maybe, was sorry he spoke;
For no one believes in joys,
And Peace on Earth is a joke,
Which, anyhow, telling destroys;
So better go on with your work:
But Boys! O Boys! O Boys!

I TREMBLE TO THINK

I TREMBLE to think that soon
Darkness shall close my sight,
And all that under the sun
I saw, and by moonlight:
Beautiful shadows and forms,
Colours, and, over the hill,
Clouds, like visible storms
At peace when the air is still;
The nameless, wonderful hues
That torture the eyes with joy
When the sea has a faint primrose,
On its blue and silver alloy—
All to be left untold,
The white and ethereal blue
That carries the chaos of gold
Dreams that I dreamt of you!
But these the years must spare,
Too transient far for time:
There is no age for the air,
Light is not of our clime.
But I whom the nets of the years
Surely at last shall enmesh
Before I can save in verse
The timeless traits of the flesh,
Shall have no peace till the cloud
Of thought takes definite shape,
And bodies you forth unbowed,
Tall, on a bare landscape,

Where earth the stone upthrusts—
Holding your exquisite frock
Against the morning gusts,
And light is on half the rock.

TO THE MOON

O BORN before our birth began!
Through all your blanched and listening vales,
Far from the echoing shores of man,
Aloof, may sing—what nightingales!

TO PETRONIUS ARBITER

PROCONSUL of Bithynia,
Who loved to turn the night to day,
Yet for your ease had more to show
Than others for their push and go.
Teach us to save the soul's expense,
And win to Fame through indolence.

NON BLANDULA ILLA

WHEN that which bore my body up takes wings
At night-fall, and my limbs are thrown to rest,
I watch in wonder, as it makes its quest,
The place it chooses for its wanderings.
No easeful meadows nor delightful springs
Nor visionary islands lure it best,
But far off on the margin of the West
A sea-gray house whereby the blackbird sings.
The waves come up like Berserks from the sea,
The crystal mountains yield a little sand,
Through level light the bird of valour calls.
Adventurous as a Viking must that be
Which will not rest when sleep on Nature falls
But hastens to the confines of the land.

FRESH FIELDS

I GAZE and gaze when I behold
The meadows springing green and gold.
I gaze until my mind is naught
But wonderful and wordless thought!
Till, suddenly, surpassing wit,
Spontaneous meadows spring in it;
And I am but a glass between
Un-walked in meadows, gold and green.

THE PLUM TREE BY THE HOUSE

IN morning light my damson showed
Its airy branches oversnowed
On all their quickening fronds,
That tingled where the early sun
Was flowing soft as silence on
Palm trees by coral ponds.
Out of the dark of sleep I come
To find the clay break into bloom,
The black boughs all in white!
I said, I must stand still and watch
This glory, strive no more to match
With similes things fair.
I am not fit to conjure up
A bird that's white enough to hop
Unstained in such a tree;
Nor crest him with the bloom to come
In purple glory on the plum.
Leave me alone with my delight
To store up joy against the night,
This moment leave to me!
Why should a poet strain his head
To make his mind a marriage bed;
Shall Beauty cease to bear?
There must be things which never shall
Be matched or made symmetrical
On Earth or in the Air;

Branches that Chinese draughtsmen drew,
Which none may find an equal to,
Unless he enter there
Where none may live—and more's the pity!—
The Perfect, the Forbidden City,
That's built—ah, God knows where!
Then leave me while I have the light
To fill my mind with growths of white,
Think of them longer than
Their budding hour, their springing day,
Until my mind is more than May;
And, maybe, I shall plan
To make them yet break out like this
And blossom where their image is,
More lasting and more deep
Than coral boughs in light inurned,
When they are to the earth returned;
And I am turned to sleep.

MELSUNGEN

Love, let us go to the village of Melsungen,
Folded in the river which is flowing without noise:
Dark are the woods and the fields are green and
 golden,
Spreading to the ripple of the hills against the skies.

Hold down the car on the long road to Melsungen;
Hold the heart down that no speed can ever sate!
Through the noon already it has raced into the
 evening,
Raced, and reached the gables in the evening falling
 late.

Long have I gazed at your window in Melsungen,
Yellow in the lamp-light while I watch the miles of
 noon,
Dreaming of peace as the arrow from the bow-string
Dreams, and gains in quiet from the speed which
 makes it swoon.

Love, let us lean from a dormer in Melsungen,
Giving on the valley where the light has found the
 stream,
Cool and becalmed, as the moonlight on the water,
Motionless and quiet as beyond our life a dream.

LIFFEY BRIDGE

I GAZED along the waters at the West,
Watching the low sky colour into flame,
Until each narrowing steeple I could name
Grew dark as the far vapours, and my breast
With silence like a sorrow was possessed.
And men as moving shadows went and came.
The smoke that stained the sunset seemed like shame,
Or lust, or some great evil unexpressed.
Then with a longing for the taintless air,
I called that desolation back again,
Which reigned when Liffey's widening banks were
bare;
Before Ben Edair gazed upon the Dane,
Before the Hurdle Ford, and long before
Finn drowned the young men by its meadowy shore.

THE SHIP

A SHIP from Valparaiso came
And in the Bay her sails were furled;
She brought the wonder of her name,
And tidings from a sunnier world.

O you must voyage far if you
Would sail away from gloom and wet,
And see beneath the Andes blue
Our white, umbrageous city set.

But I was young and would not go;
For I believed when I was young
That somehow life in time would show
All that was ever said or sung.

Over the golden pools of sleep
She went long since with gilded spars;
Into the night-empurpled deep,
And traced her legend on the stars.

But she will come for me once more,
And I shall see that city set,
The mountainous, Pacific shore—
By God, I half believe it yet!

TO THE LADY —

IN the most intimate years your gables grew
And stood by Oxford on their watery hill;
When all the days were spacious, they were still
A country home of music undisturbed.
You keep your life aloof from common things,
Lovely and strange in beauty of its own;
Like a tall Saint who clasps upon her breast
A Pindar hidden by a palimpsest,
And both ordain a life austere and curbed;
Fixed in the change, and timeless as a shrine
Upon the border of a Grecian town
Where there is calm beyond the reach of gold.
My mind seeks beauty and it dwells on you
Under the elms—and all the air was Spring's,
A leaven of silence in the misty dew
Leavening the light, the shadow leavening,
Your cloak and that tall feather, white under blue—
Walking beside a poet in the evening.

EARTH AND SEA

It does me good to see the ships
Back safely from the deep sea main;
To see the slender mizzen tips,
And all the ropes that stood the strain;

To hear the old men shout "Ahoy",
Glad-hearted at the journey's end,
And fix the favourite to the buoy,
Who had the wind and sea to friend;

To meet, when sails are lashed to spars,
The men for whom Earth's free from care,
And Heaven a clock with certain stars,
And Hell a word with which to swear.

SUNT APUD INFERNOS TOT
MILIA FORMOSARUM

I, as the Wise Ones held of old,
Hold there's an Underworld to this;
And do not fear to be enrolled
In Death's kind metamorphosis.

More wonderful than China's halls
To Polo; more than all the West
That shone through the confining walls
When great Magellan made the quest.

Enlarged and free, the wings of Rhyme
Cannot outreach its purple air;
The generations of all Time
And all the lovely Dead are there.

R I N G S E N D

[After Reading Tolstoi]

I WILL live in Ringsend
With a red-headed whore,
And the fanlight gone in
Where it lights the hall-door;
And listen each night
For her querulous shout,
As at last she streels in
And the pubs empty out.
To soothe that wild breast
With my old-fangled songs,
Till she feels it redressed
From inordinate wrongs,
Imagined, outrageous,
Preposterous wrongs,
Till peace at last comes,
Shall be all I will do,
Where the little lamp blooms
Like a rose in the stew;
And up the back garden
The sound comes to me
Of the lapsing, unsoilable,
Whispering sea.

MARCUS CURTIUS

IN response to an oracle which declared that a gulf recently opened in the Forum could only be closed by casting into it that which Rome held most dear, Marcus Curtius, fully armed, mounted his war-horse and plunged, for that which Rome held dearest was her chivalry.

'Tis not by brooding on delight
That men take heart of pride, and force
To pull the saddle-girthings tight
And close the gulf on staring horse.

From softness only softness comes;
Urged by a bitterer shout within,
Men of the trumpets and the drums
Seek, with appropriate discipline,

That Glory past the pit or wall
Which contradicts and stops the breath,
And with immortalising gall
Builds the most stubborn things on death.

TO A COCK

WHY do you strut and crow,
And thus all gaudy go,
Through squalor, with a show
That tempts derision?
Do you a livery use
Or dress you up in hues
You were not free to choose
Of your own vision?

Colours of dawn and joy
That with delight destroy:
Your body all a Troy
To house desire,
Your mien as proud and brave
As his who fought to save
The fatal Queen who gave
But gifts of fire.

Strange that a small brown hen
Should charm you thus! For men
Great Beauty shines, as when
The Argive valleys
Bore her limbs for whom Greece
For ten years knew no peace,
Or our own Western seas
Bore Grace O'Malley's.

Their birth no happy star
Attended; rigid war
Beleaguered towns, and far
 Deep fields were bloody!
Demure is not the mien
Of Beauty, by her een
The insolent pale Queen
 Who makes me ruddy.

What, if I could appear
As you do, and strike fear!
But would she fail to sneer
 Who will not heed a
Lover? nor cry "Absurd
You are, but as a bird . . . !
Is it to be inferred
 That I am Leda?"

Nor would it much avail
Were I to say "The male
In beauty doth prevail
 Largely in Nature",
For she would but retort,
"Is man the only sort
Whose females must pay court,
 My beauteous creature?"

Alas, befeathered bull!
My love's too pitiful,
Too pensive, kind, less full

Than that of bird or
Beast, overcharged with fate
And more compassionate
Than yours you satiate
Half linked to murder.

The more we rise above
The beast or even the dove
Sorrow distempers love;
But yours is gladdest,
Soon gathered and soon spent,
A fierce arbitrament;
And you do not repent
O perfect Sadist!

To Semele none came,
None to each Sabine dame,
Not Hercules aflame—
Not dawn to heaven,
Came with as great affright
As you do burning bright,
Not—for the poor hen's plight—
To Kathleen Kevin;

Further she cannot go,
She falters and lies low
Brought down by love, a throe
That throws us all;
Soon to be scaled and hacked
And, like a city, sacked

With nothing left intact
Within the wall.

When you have persevered
As did the dawn you cheered
When darkness disappeared,
Give not the strife up
Till by the Passion Play
Of Death for Life's relay,
The old authentic way
You conjure life up!

O trample her in dust
So that you slake your lust!
Pull back her neck and thrust
To kill the tempter.
Your peace how dare she fret
With feet demurely set?
Give her another yet
And don't exempt her!

Take vengeance for the sting
In love's elusive wing,
With beak and talon cling
In full refulgence.
O work for all your worth
To bring your spirit to birth;
For this kind goeth forth
By self-indulgence!

For when your spurs were gained
Passion was unrestrained.
Your hues were not obtained
From dust and ashes.
You did of old deride
His spirit who denied.
You are but gratified
By Life's fierce flashes.

Now indignation foams!
The purple of your combs
Is purpler than the plum's
Or purple heather's.
What though it must endure!
Break Beauty! O secure
Some respite from the lure
Of all the feathers!

CONCERNING HERMIONE

I. THE CONQUEST

“SINCE the Conquest none of us
Has died young except in battle.”
I knew that hers was no mean house,
And that beneath her gentle prattle
There was likely hid in words
What could never anger Fame;
The glory of continuous swords,
The obligations of a name.
Had I grown incredulous,
Thinking for a little space:
Though she has the daring brows,
She has not the falcon face;
In the storm from days of old
It is hard to keep at poise,
And it is the over-bold,
Gallant-hearted, Fate destroys:
Could I doubt that her forebears
Kept their foothold on the sands,
Triumphed through eight hundred years,
From the hucksters kept their lands,
And still kept the conquering knack—
I who had myself gone down
Without waiting the attack
Of their youngest daughter’s frown?

II. EXORCISM

To banish your shape from my mind
I thought of the dangerous wood
Where a man might wander and find,
By a stream in the solitude,
The Queen it is death if one sees,
Death by a merciless dart;
But how could that bring me release,
Shot as I am to the heart?

Beauty will cure me, I cried;
By Beauty is Beauty dislodged.
And I worked on a dream till I eyed
The Queens whom the young man judged.
But the vision faded and slipt;
And the cure was a cure of no worth;
For I said, when the Queens were stript,
I have given the prize to a fourth.

Ugliness, Chaos and War
I know, but I would not invoke;
They would feed you as darkness a star,
And strengthen the beam of my yoke.
If Love be reborn in a song
I with my fate will not quarrel,
But you, if you do him a wrong,
May be changed to a reed or a laurel.

III. EXCOMMUNICATION

Go to the fields of purple and gold;
With lovers and young Queens remain,
Blossoms and battlements of old,
Far in the background of my brain.
Rest with them there, but stand apart,
Although you equal those who died;
For no one enters in my heart
By Death or Love undeified.

IV. SILENCE

The purple falls between the pines,
The sun that blanched Arundel walls,
Remembering them as he declines,
With purple fills his airy halls.
We drove all day; and all day long
Of Love and longing long we spoke;
And sang so often ballad and song,
The crescent moon cannot evoke
Another word; though Beauty calls
There is no word that can be said.
If Hesperus unhailed shines on,
O do not dream that Love is dead.
The hand I take is not withdrawn,
Between the pines the purple falls.

V. A SOUND

She called me by my Christian name,
Quite simply of her own accord,
And unexpectedly it came—

O the exceeding great reward!
Where are the years of longing, years
Of vigils and anxieties,
My perturbations now, my fears?
Gone with the wind across the trees.
Enchanted now, I walk in peace,
As one who walking on a sward
At twilight hears, or thinks he hears,
A fanfare out of Joyous Gard.

CENTAURS

To get away from Reason seems
To be the first thing one must do
To live in happiness; with dreams
Some cloud the mind, and some bedew
The intellect with subtler juice,
Till good Lyaeus sets them free;
Some use tobacco, some abuse
The herbs of healing: suffer me
To live with leathery women and men
Who give their whole mind up to horses;
Mount and dismount and mount again,
And leave the stars to their own courses.
On through the morning air to go,
To break the rainbow on the briar,
To hold the horse, to hear him blow
The bellows of primeval fire;
To feel life surging through the dark
As waywardly as once it came
Before the filched unnatural spark
Outshone the kindly natural flame.
Thus was the Ancient Wisdom found,
A wisdom suited to my mind,
And taught by Chiron the renowned,
The man and animal combined.

ANGLERS

THAT pleasant Chinese poet Ching Chih Ho,
Who spent his time in fishing with no bait,
Recalled at last from exile, would not go,
Nor leave the stream where he could meditate
And foil all interrupters by his ruse,
Sitting beside the water with his line;
Was it a wonder that he should refuse,
When he could catch his rhythms half asleep,
Watching below the lilies fishes shine,
Or move not—it was all the same to him—
And river mosses when he gazed more deep
And deeper, clouds across the azure swim?
There's not a roof now on the courts whose
schemes
Kept men awake and anxious all night long,
Distracted with their working out; but dreams
He made in idleness and turned to Song
Can still delight his people. As for me,
I, who must daily at enactments look
To make men happy by legality,
Envy the poet of that baitless hook.

TO THE LIFFEY WITH THE SWANS

KEEP you these calm and lovely things,
And float them on your clearest water;
For one would not disgrace a King's
Transformed beloved and buoyant daughter.

And with her goes this sprightly swan,
A bird of more than royal feather,
With alban beauty clothed upon:
O keep them fair and well together!

As fair as was that doubled Bird,
By love of Leda so besotten,
That she was all with wonder stirred,
And the Twin Sportsmen were begotten!

HIGH TIDE AT MALAHIDE

[*To Lynn Doyle*]

THE luminous air is wet
As if the moon came through
To hold as in a net
Such as the spiders set
By ditch and rivulet,
The grey unfallen dew.
The sun is not down yet;
As yet the eve is new. .

The water is all a-quiver,
There scarce is room to stand
Beside the tidal river
So narrowed is the strand;
And, over there, the wood
Is standing in a flood,
Erect, and upside down;
And at its roots, a swan.

A silvern mist enhances,
By tangling half the light,
The glowing bay's expanses
Which else had been too bright;
For air is subject to
A tidal ebb and flow.

And all the weeds with sandy root,
That in the sunshine on the beach

Crackled like ashes underfoot,
Are standing upright now to stretch,
All ambered from within, each frond
That sways revived in the great pond;
And every axon in my brain
And neuron takes the tide again,
Made all the fuller from the tide
That brims the sands of Malahide;
But what shall come into it now
I know not. I await the flow.
I must abide the cosmic main
Whose high tide floods the stranded brain;
For no such miracle is wrought
On earth like this by taking thought.

*Oh, look at the ships
With their sails coming down
And the wonderful sweeps
That are steering them still
To the little grey town
On the green of the hill!
Are they Norman or Norse,
Or descendants of Conn
Returning in force
From a lost British town,
With women and loot now the Roman is gone?
They are Norse! For the bugles are wild in the woods,
Alarms to the farms to look after their goods:
To bury their cauldrons and hide all their herds.*

*They are Norse! I can tell by the length of their swords—
Oh, no; by their spears and the shape of their shields
They are Normans: the men who stand stiff in the fields
In hedges of battle that no one may turn;
The men who build castles that no one may burn;
The men who give laws to the chief and the kern.
Salt of the earth,
Salt of the sea,
Norman and Norse
And the wild man in me!
The founders of cities,
The takers of fields,
The heroes too proud to wear armour or shields,
Their blood is in you,
As it cannot but be,
O Townsmen of towns on an estuary!*

O clear Swords River that now without noise
Meets in this marvellous equipoise,
O clear Swords River, O let me know
What is it you add to the undertow,
For sight and sound like a bubble tost
On the high tide no more than on ether is lost:
No sight or odour or country sound
Lately reflected or long ago drowned,
But rises again, and as beautiful
As the golden weed when the tide is full,
Or the clouds that floating becalmed, sublime,
Break out white sails for the azure time.

With what do you mingle your merchandise
Of hawthorns budding or Autumn skies;
The cackling flight of the golden nib
That rallies the leaf to protect the crib;
The moth gone mad in a zigzag flight
On the magical edge of the day and the night;
The flag leaves serried beside your fords,
Like bronze gone green in the ancient swords;
The shadowless light of the peace to be;
The scent of the rain when it dries on the lea?
White wings are all that endow the sea,
Except when it grates on its soundless bars
Of diamonds shoaled from the fallen stars;
For all that you brought from the fields of home
Is stored, not lost, in the fields of foam,
And rises again, for it was not dead,
Here where the meadows and waters wed.

Remember that by no force terrene
Does the high tide rise till no sands are seen,
When silver limits the old green plain,
And the luminous mist floods into the brain
At will to replenish the Past again:
Such wonders cannot on earth be done
Till the moon joins with the golden sun.

PER ITER TENEBRICOSUM

ENOUGH! Why should a man bemoan
A Fate that leads the natural way?
Or think himself a worthier one
Than those who braved it in their day?
If only gladiators died,
Or Heroes, Death would be his pride;
But have not little maidens gone,
And Lesbia's sparrow—all alone?

THE MILL AT NAUL

I CALL to mind, to bring me sleep,
That ruin on the naming hill
Of Naul, with ivy on the keep
That looks down on a ruined mill,
Because my mind comes home and rests
On things which Time no more molests:
For keep above and mill below
There is no further way to go:
They have already gone so far
With Time, that as the hill they are,
Or as the mill-pond by the mill,
Which, though it flows, is standing still;
Or as the stream and broken range
That only know immortal change;
For Time gives here, in turn for peace,
Man's handiwork a timeless lease;
And makes and takes it to its own
As if it were a stream or stone.
And that is why I love to call
To mind the drowsy mill at Naul,
Because such old things flatter me
With warrants of Eternity,
When Time's close flag suspends the fray
With ivy green against the gray.

And I can leave my pride which raged
Too long, here, in the keep besieged;

And let my love descend to spread
Through lowly roofs the gift of bread;
And know that I need range no more
With Love and Pride accounted for.
I see the mill, as day is done,
In sunset of a tardy sun
That fills the valley to the East
With all the overflowing West;
Until the valley brims to hold
An airy pond of dusty gold
That shows, as if far down in dream,
The hill, the mill, the little stream.

The light is golden down below,
But, on the keep, the afterglow
Is cold as steel, and sideways flung
Where ivy leaves the walls unhung.

I saw it first through air so wet
With dew that falling leaves fell straight;
For woods, for all their brazen towers,
Withstand not Autumn's golden showers:
So where I stood the road was rich
With bronze and gold that filled the ditch;
And boughs and leaves dropped so much rain,
I said, The wheel may turn again,
And belt itself with drops anew,
And yet not beat these woods for dew.

And now I lie, till, in my mind,
The mill is lit, the keep is lined
With men-at-arms on sentry-go
Who stand to watch the mill below.
I see the pond's potential power
Where might is stilled to conjure flour,
And, from the strength of rain pent up
From Heaven, transform an earthly crop.
I catch the mill-wheel's homely sound,
The uncouth magic of its round
Splashing bright blessings as it turns,
On twinkling tufts and dangling ferns,
Performing, with expansive girth,
The mingling rites of heaven and earth;
I see and hear it clear as day
Though Naul is eighteen miles away.

Don't think these are the only turns
The half-unconscious mind discerns.
I see far more than you can spy
Who are not half asleep as I;
I see the way, now half awake,
The protons and electrons take
To spin the world, and bring the grist
To wild dreams of the scientist,
Who knows, for all he hopes to know,
That round a myriad mill-wheels go
From some far pond, unplumbed and still,
Which breaks to power and moves the mill.

And now I dwindle till my stream
Is lost within the pond of dream,
The pond of dream which holds far more
Than any stream of earth can pour;
But, if I lie resigned and still,
The pond at length may rise and fill.

I do not wonder that none found
The roofless mill restored and sound,
Because the more the mind's alert,
The more the inner eye is hurt,
An eye to which the light of day
Is rarely helpful, anyway.
Before I had a mind at all,
The mill was working well at Naul;
And, maybe, when I am resigned
To lose in sleep the wakeful mind,
The mill may start to work again
As once it stood to grind the grain;
And hum its song for many a season,
Where now it does not stand to reason.

It seems to me that far down there
The dusky light is dustier,
The dust is rising in the air;
And over every window square
There is an eyebrow dusty white;
And would that roof be half so bright
Unless with flour? It must be flour:
The mill is trembling into power!

And now I hear a distant drone,
The upper and the nether stone,
So far away it only comes
To fade away in waving hums,
That tell of work so sweet and strong
That all that holds it turns to song.

The mill beside the stream is lit
As if its walls glowed through with wheat;
And only in the upper streams
Of light a lonely sea-bird gleams
In one long arc . . . Ah let it go:
I want to watch the mill below.

The purple evening turns to dark,
I soon shall see the cobbles spark
Where unseen horses pull their load
Of sacks along a rising road.
I wonder if I dared look up
To see the hill, would all this stop?
And all the scenes that sleep has made,
To deeper sleep return to fade?
I wonder now, will this go on
When light, when light is quite withdrawn;
And if, when sleep is deeper still,
The mill without the miller will?

THE IMAGE-MAKER

HARD is the stone, but harder still
The delicate performing will
That guided by a dream alone,
Subdues and moulds the hardest stone,
Making the stubborn jade release
The emblem of eternal peace.

If but the will be firmly bent,
No stuff resists the mind's intent;
The adamant abets his skill
And sternly aids the artist's will,
To clothe in perdurable pride
Beauty his transient eyes descried.

TO ETHNE

I SAW a beautiful face,
And ever since the seeing,
To pause for a moment's space
Is to bring it again into being.

Over the splendour and gloom
Of thoughts, like a misty star,
As a goddess out of a mist would come
To the hard-prest sons of war.

Memory, enfold her and cling!
And I will go forth against odds.
But heart, forget her and sing!
This is no place for the Gods.

OFF SICILY

SHELLS tilted up by Venus' heel

Seen through the milk of morning air;
White Sicily confronts our keel

With twin cliffs rising, each as fair
As that smooth-lined up-tilted boat
From which the Foam-Born Queen stepped out.

But who can land where I am bound?

In vain the natives tread their home.
They shall not find its holy ground,

Who have not sought it in the tome
Whose letters twist like curls that deck
The nape of Venus' golden neck.

THE OLD GOOSE

THE daylong rains are dried,
Cold is the mountain-side,
The evening light is pined,
 Not heaven's four quarters
Know if the moon be set,
But where green sods are wet
The white stream holds you yet,
 Lover of airs and waters!

Soon you will cross the loam,
And walk the pathway home
Before the faint stars come,
 And seek your stable.
Your old wild life exchanged
For comforts all is changed;
For rime-white deserts ranged,
 A white-washed gable!

Oh, have you quite forgot,
The flights outbreasting thought
Before this homely lot
 Half tamed your pinions?
The mountains and the stars
Were once your only bars,
And where the north wind soars
 Were your dominions.

You know the depths of air,
You know the times of year,
To you all paths are clear
And heights of heaven,
The fens and broken bays
Where never an hunter strays;
All cold inhuman ways
To you are even.

And all those mirrors known
That turn the mountains down:
Your flight a moment shown
In gloaming deeper
Than those high tranquil tides
Through which your courage rides
When some straight purpose guides
Its winged keeper.

There's blue beyond the peak
Of Patrick's frozen Reek,
Oh take on breast and beak
The night's dark onset,
Washed in the mauve twilight
O'er some far western bight,
Where islands rest in light
Long after sunset!

Islands that gleam and float
Untouched by voyaging boat,

Withheld but not remote,
Where wave breaks slowly
Till all the beach is green,
Where the great lords are seen
Who fought and loved a Queen,
Armed, amorous, and holy.

Easy to put life by
When friend and foe were nigh;
Easy for them to die
Armed and elated!
And well they died in sooth,
Who found in fighting truth,
Before old age had youth
Repudiated.

Theirs was the exultant age,
Theirs the ecstatic rage;
And the embellished page
Enshrined the slaying.
For, as old bards averred,
The song goes with the sword,
O wing that writ'st the Word,
Write down this saying:

Love life and use it well:
That is the tale they tell,
Who broke it like a shell,
And won great glory.

But you and I are both
Inglorious in sloth,
Unless our ranging youth
 Redeem our story.

For not preserved by fear
We fell on quiet here,
Our friends all dead and dear,
 A brave blithe army.
You have your grassy spring
And cloudy barred wing;
And I old dreams that sing,
 And memories stormy.

So that the egg be laid
For feathers unafraid,
What matter where is made,
 When strong winds tire,
The nest, if we can spend
Our age in peace, my friend?
After the journey's end
 The village spire!

V E R S E

WHAT should we know,
For better or worse,
Of the Long Ago,
Were it not for Verse:
What ships went down;
What walls were razed;
Who won the crown;
What lads were praised?
A fallen stone,
Or a waste of sands;
And all is known
Of Art-less lands.
But you need not delve
By the sea-side hills
Where the Muse herself
All Time fulfils,
Who cuts with his scythe
All things but hers;
All but the blithe
Hexameters.

REFLECTION

SUN, and not a breeze at all
On the willow-lined canal
Where the nodding horses tow
An old boat with painted prow
Dark and heavy, gliding on,
While its new paint in the sun
Circles out an eye to watch
Every little roof of thatch;
Trees and bridges; grassy border;
Plumey trains; and, set in order,
Posts to bring the telephone
To each little country town,
Where the gombeen man rings up
His stock-broker's bucket shop;
But the wire holds the birds
Quite unconscious of his words;
As each tiny singing throat
Titters welcome to the boat:
And the steersman knows how far
It is still to Mullingar.

Would there be so much to lose
If I changed into his shoes,
With my buttocks on the rudder,
Cleared from Ringsend on the Dodder,
With no care except to wipe
On my sleeve my old clay pipe?

He would make the change with pleasure,
For he envies me my leisure;
But the boat that I would steer
Is the boat reflected where
Sunlight first must shine to show it,
And no earthly horse can tow it;
And no ripple must disturb
Garden wall and grassy kerb.
But with these on the canal,
Is there need to change at all?

At Gibney's, from the
IXth Lock, Clondalkin.
April 1937.

LULLABY

WANDER no more, my Thoughts, but keep
Within the moated realm of Sleep;
Wander no more, nor further than
The dusty wavering moth may span,
With wings which love the hearth-low light
With which the casement gilds the night;
Wander no more!

Content you there to rest and dream,
Nor watch the flickering armour gleam,
For nothing that the past has done
Need break your rest to ponder on,
Nor yet the future's lordlier scope:
Sleep is a sounder thing than Hope,
Content you there.

So yield to dream, and feel the sway
Of Earth upon the rainbow way;
And dream you feel it lift and take
A way you never felt awake;
For O, unless your dreams outdo
Your life, there is not much for you;
So yield to dream.

On darkness launched, now you go forth
Where there is neither South or North;
Nor Now and Then, nor Here and There;

But something deeper than these are;
So may you, when you reach that bourne,
Be most reluctant to return,
 On darkness launched.

THE EMPEROR'S DREAM

WHEN the internal dream gives out,
I let my eyes wander about
Amongst the gay and the grotesque
Ornaments upon my desk,

Where books are set on end and stacked
By Plato and by Homer backed;
But, in the present mood preferred,
I see my Chinese crystal bird:

A Phoenix maybe, who can say?
That ship that, off Arabia,
Sighted the Phoenix flying East,
Its crew could tell about it best.

They did not need a second look;
They knew it by the course it took;
And who am I to disagree,
When China sends it back to me

To sit before me carven clear,
As if the very atmosphere
Of regions where but dreams abide
Was seized on and solidified

To crystal that shall last as long
As Beauty gains from Art and Song,
From those who bend to carve or sing,
Their tribute to her flying wing?

Was ever artist more supreme
To catch, to hold, to mould a dream,
Year in, year out, day after day,
And never to let a line go astray

Till undistracted, undeterred,
He caught the seldom-flying bird;
From solid air he craved its crest;
And set it airy in its nest?

I send my thoughts across the skies
Of regions where the Phoenix flies,
Where Past and Present are as one,
To bow before the Emperor's throne;

And seek the artist in the court,
Where only such as he resort;
And from these barbarous times and ways
Offer my crude barbarian praise.

Before we meet, I shall be told
How, one day in the days of old,
The Emperor hearing what he did
(For nothing's from the Emperor hid)

Commanded him to send a proof
Of what on wing or fin or hoof
He fashioned with such skill that, poor,
His name yet reached an Emperor;

And that, when he had seen the bird,
He paused, and solemnly averred:
The crystal wings without a flaw
Were those that in a dream he saw.

And how the artist with bowed head
And eyes cast down, replied and said:
That all that made for skill he owed
To Him from Whom perfection flowed.

For in the Emperor's mind were held
Art's emblems; and, if one excelled,
Of those who mould, or carve or limn,
His genius was due to him.

And that at this the Emperor laughed,
Praising the master of a craft
Which had so worthily enshrined
Things hidden in an Emperor's mind.

We need not meet, since this is so:
What every craftsman knows, we know:
Before our work stands up complete,
The Emperor must have dreamt of it.

And if we please the Emperor's whim,
And perfectly produce his dream,
Time can but turn the works of men
Into an Emperor's dream again.

PALINODE

TWENTY years are gone
Down the winding road,
Years in which it shone
More often than it snowed;
And now old Time brings on,
Brings on the palinode.

I have been full of mirth;
I have been full of wine;
And I have trod the earth
As if it all were mine;
And laughed to bring to birth
The lighter lyric line.

Before it was too late,
One thing I learnt and saw:
Prophets anticipate
What Time brings round by law;
Call age before its date
To darken Youth with awe.

Why should you drink the rue?
Or leave in righteous rage
A world that will leave you
Howe'er you walk the stage?
Time needs no help to do
His miracle of age.

A few years more to flow
From miracle-working Time,
And surely I shall grow
Incapable of rhyme,
Sans Love and Song, and so
An echo of a mime.

Yet if my stone set forth
The merry Attic blade's
Remark, I shall have worth
Achieved before Life fades:
"A gentle man on Earth
And gentle 'mid the Shades".

TO DEATH

BUT for your Terror
Where would be Valour?
What is Love for
 But to stand in your way?
Taker and Giver,
For all your endeavour
You leave us with more
 Than you touch with decay!

WIT AND SATIRE

AFTER GALEN

ONLY the Lion and the Cock,
As Galen says, withstand Love's shock.
So, Dearest, do not think me rude
If I yield now to lassitude,
But sympathise with me. I know
You would not have me roar, or crow.

ON TROY

I GIVE more praise to Troy's redoubt
For Love kept in, than War kept out.

TO SOME SPITEFUL PERSONS

YOUR Envy pleases me and serves
My fame by all your muttering talk,
Just as the starling flock that swerves
With shrieks aside, and shows the hawk.

Men will lift up the head to stare,
Although it never stoop to strike,
At that still pinion stretched on air,
When all such chattering fills the dyke.

TO A BOON COMPANION

IF medals were ordained for drinks,
Or soft communings with a minx,
Or being at your ease belated,
By heavens, you'd be decorated!
And not Alcmena's chesty son
Have room to put your ribbands on!

TO THE MAIDS NOT TO WALK IN THE WIND

WHEN the wind blows, walk not abroad,
For, Maids, you may not know
The mad, quaint thoughts which incommode
Me when the winds do blow.

What though the tresses of the treen
In doubled beauty move,
With silver added to their green,
They were not made for Love.

But when your clothes reveal your thighs
And surge around your knees,
Until from foam you seem to rise,
Like Venus from the seas . . .

Though ye are fair, it is not fair!
Unless you will be kind,
Till I am dead, and changed to AIR,
O walk not in the wind!

TO A MUSHROOM

No one sang thee, little fielding,
Sang thy wondrous being and birth,
Till to mute attraction yielding
I first hymned thee here on earth.

Though I never saw thee start up,
I have seen thee when thou wert
Poised as with an hinder part up—
Oh my sudden quaint upstart!

In the short grass by the fount-head
Thou art found as free from rule
As a faun, and unaccounted
As a little boy from school.

Or a baby plump and ample,
Whose exuberance was led
By Silenus' bad example
Till the bowl fell o'er his head.

Of all growing things the oddest;
Only of a sudden seen
Unexpected and immodest
As above a stocking, skin!

Soft, I must entreat thee gently;
For I can but do thee wrong,
And but think inconsequently
Who for daylight pitch my song.

Suns for thee must still illumine an
Arid waste beneath the sky,
Wistful, cold and thwartly human
And Augustan—even as I.

Darkness only does not flout thee
When alone thou tak'st the light,
And the silence floats about thee,
Moon-loved dewy child of night.

Thine example shows quite clearly
That the things we think deranged
Would be most delightful merely,
Merely if the scene were changed.

THE NETTLE

A VERY pleasant hillside falls among
Pines to the south, and in a greensward settles;
And while we loitered there my Love was stung,
My girl-Adonis on the thigh by nettles.
O what a bore! I must sit down, said she;
I cannot walk! . . . O darling, what's the matter?
A nettle stung me where you must not see,
Just where my stocking ends and thigh grows
fatter.

But I will shut my eyes before it gets . . .
And you shall guide me so I shall not miss it—
Before the poison in your system sets,
I'll press my lips and very gently kiss it.
The little blister white upon the white
Of sudden snow where violets were peeping
Was reddened by the cure which set it right.
Now if, years hence, you find they are not keeping
My grave with all the reverence that is due
To one whom Beauty's smile in Life elated,
O, Busybody, trouble not! Can you
Be sure the nettle waves to desecrate it?

A PITHY PRAYER AGAINST LOVE

Gods, get me out of it!
Spirits of Laughter
Come to my aid now
And exorcise it!
O you, Priapus,
Stand till you're skyward,
Stand till you're all staff
And cannot rise it!
Let your preposterous
Pole fall upon her:
"That for her honour!"
Let not a thought now
Of comfort escape us:
Think what in boisterous,
Blowing Jack Falstaff,
Shakespeare made Love look.
Think how that cheerful
Chiel Hippocleides
Would this my fearful
Passion disparage;
Dancing incessantly,
Dancing indecently,
Danced, till he danced off
A cure for all heart-aches
(Dancing the cordax!),
Danced, till his carriage

Displeased the bride's father;
Dancing it further,
He danced off his marriage;
Danced to surmount his
Fate with: *ὄν φροντῖς!*
Teach me his courage.

CAVALIER ACCENTS

TELL ME NOW

SHE

TELL me now is Love's day done?
Beauty as elect and rare
As when towns were trampled on
Lives to-day and takes the air.
Yet no amorous Triumvir
Throws the world and Rome away;
No one swims Abydos' bay;
Towns are not cast down, and none,
None begets the Moon and Sun.

HE

Do not let him hear your taunt!
Love's as strong to-day as when
Walls could not endure his brunt,
And he broke the Trojan men.
He can do as much again;
Do not doubt him for an hour,
Tempt his pleasure, not his power;
Danger gives him no affront,
He is not cooled by Hellespont.

BEGONE, SWEET GHOST

BEGONE, sweet Ghost, O get you gone!
Or haunt me with your body on;
And in that lovely terror stay
To haunt me happy night and day.
For when you come I miss it most,
Begone, sweet Ghost!

But do not clothe you in the dress
Whereby was young Actæon killed;
He died because of loveliness,
And I will die from that withheld,
Unless you take on flesh, unless
In that you dress!

PERFECTION

By Perfection fooled too long,
I will dream of that no longer!
Venus, you have done me wrong
By your unattainable beauty,
Till it seemed to be my duty
To belittle all the throng.
I have found attraction stronger;
I have found a lady younger
Who can make a hard heart stir;
Like an athlete, tall and slender,
With no more than human splendour;
Yet, for all the faults of her,
Than Perfection perfecter.

Though she guards it, grace breaks through
Every blithe and careless movement.
What shall I compare her to?
When she takes the ball left-handed,
Speed and sweetness are so blended
Nothing awkward she can do,
She, whose faults are an improvement!
If she only knew what Love meant
I would not be seeking now
To describe the curbed perfection
Of all loveliness in action.
Perfect she would be, I vow,
With the mole above the brow!

GAZE ON ME

GAZE on me, though you gaze in scorn;
O Lady, fix on me those eyes,
And then the darkness may be borne
When two such glorious lights arise;
For is there one, if stars shine bright,
Who will not praise the dark of night?

As gloaming brings the bending dew,
That flowers may faint not in the sun,
So, Lady, now your looks renew
My heart, although it droops adown;
And thus it may unwithered be,
When you shall deign to smile on me.

PERSONAL

TO A FRIEND

If it be true that poets, as you say,
Envisage in their verse and populate,
By dreams that shall come true, the future state,
I must be careful whom I shall portray
Lest I sit down, forever and for aye,
With the strange characters I celebrate.
O awful thought: our Fancy is our Fate!
(Let me erase some writings while I may!)

But one thing I am sure of, dear A. E.:
I will confront the malcreated crew,
Victims or merely subjects of my song,
If I can reach the bourne where you shall be
Creating kindness as you always do,
And I may bring my fancy friends along.

TO A. E.
GOING TO AMERICA

DUBLIN transmits you, famous, to the West.
America shall welcome you, and we,
Reflected in that mighty glass, shall see,
In full proportion, power at which we guessed:
We live too near the eagle and the nest
To know the pinion's wide supremacy:
But yours, of all the wings that crossed the sea,
Carries the wisest heart and gentlest.
It is not multitudes, but Man's idea
Makes a place famous. Though you now digress,
Remember to return, as, back from Rome,
Du Bellay journeyed to his Lyrè home;
And Plutarch, willingly, to Chæroneia
Returned, and stayed, lest the poor town be less.

TO W. B. YEATS, WHO SAYS THAT
HIS CASTLE OF BALLYLEE
IS HIS MONUMENT

To stones trust not your monument
To make a living fame endure.
Who built Dun Angus battlement?
O'Flaherty is forgotten in Auchnanure.

And he who told how Troy was sacked
And what men clipt the lovely Burd,
Had seven Mayors to swear, in fact,
Their towns first heard his babbling word.

TO MY FRIEND
THE RT. HON. LORCAN GALERAN

[A Great Householder]

MERIDIAN man, Enstomacher,
For whom the whole world's fruits are fare,
For whom all Life is but a Feast's,
And all the world is filled with Guests!

Spread out the Board, dispense the cost,
There's not a moment to be lost
Until the Mystic Wine and Bread
Are guzzled and engulleted!

Others on canvas spend their soul,
You on the tablecloth and bowl;
And as you fill proceed to quote
What Shakespeare and Sam Johnson wrote.

We take our seats at your commands
Upon the fare stretch forth our hands;
And grow amazed, while grows the drinking,
To hear your hobby is clear thinking.

Your table, like a moon silvern,
Shows what a kitchen sun you burn,
An alternating sun that heats
The growing herbs and lowing meats.

O Tableland! O plain of Troy,
Whereon we wage the wars of joy!
You, Agamemnon to our force,
Big-bellied as the Trojan horse!

Well marshalled by your genial roar,
The servants massed in order pour
The blood some thirsty summer shed,
Now ten years rising from the dead.

Still from your cellars' costly glooms
Each bottle like an Orpheus comes,
And bends his golden neck till we
Can all but clasp Eurydice.

A Victory plunges through the air.
As well as Love, wine casts out fear!
The butler's Marathon goes round,
And still your friends orchestral sound.

The artists are in heart to join;
There's scholarship in each sirloin:
"Do you prefer it brown or red?
What did you say that Shakespeare said?

"The book is somewhere on my shelves:
Yes; God helps those who help themselves . . .
Don't mind, my Friend, it's only froth,
I like a dappled tablecloth!

"Wine should not make a man afeared.
A chewing chin won't spoil your beard.
Well, let your stomach fight it out
Starvation's no soft cure for gout."

Thanks, thanks! For this (I won't refuse)
Opens the lips of every Muse,
Makes us expand, makes trouble cease
And brings the broad Tiberian peace.

Magee no longer thinks alone,
Clarke talks and rouses silent Hone,
While booming through the mist is heard
Responsible, the clear-thought word.

I cannot move, I will not speak
Without Parnassus' second peak:
The Friend to whom you oft refer,
Your cousin dear and echoer.

Once you fill up the ravening Maw,
There's not a doubt about the Law.
Just cut that chicken through the girth,
I'm battling here for peace on Earth!

But there's a thirst I cannot slake
Till water-lilies drink a lake,
For I must get inside the cup
If I would drink what bears me up.

Once like your Body bulged the Earth
Pear-shaped, before the Moon had birth.
O keep your tropic waistcoat tight,
Your Belly may fly off to-night!

And mounted to the heavenly dome
Another Moon would light us home,
Fair as the ocean shell that rose,
And harvest-full and grandiose!

Born of your bounty, take my Song
Redounding like a dinner gong,
Translunary recorder pale
Of how your guests you can regale.

Till all the Earth's volcanic heat
Shall bear a better heart to beat,
Fame shall not fail you, generous man,
Magnificent meridian!

TO MY PORTRAIT
BY AUGUSTUS JOHN

*"O infinite Virtue, comest thou through
The world's great snare uncaught?"*

IMAGE of me according to John

Back from the world behind his brow,
Back from the boulevards of his brain,
My painted wraith, what ails you now?
Whom have you met with or discerned;

Where have you bivouacked or lain,
Who look like Cæsar late returned
Exhausted from a long campaign?
Where were the tropic fields you fought?

What hostels heard your jibes and jests?
Alas! my wraith, you answer not;
But on your face a pallor rests.
The opals of Elysian skies

Such as he paints around his friends
Are not reflected in those eyes,
In vain that coloured peace descends;
And never in the meadows where

He sets his women great with child,
And dew has calmed the atmosphere
And all the willowy light is mild—
O never in his mind's Provence

Did you come by that look of yours!
Some ecstasy of Love's mischance
Undreamt of by the Troubadours,

Or message passionate or absurd,
Has made you look as who should seek,
And yet lose confidence in a word,
And seem to think before you speak.
Is it a warning? And, to me,
Your criticism upon Life?
If this be caused by Poetry?
What should a Poet tell his wife?
Whate'er it is, howe'er it came,
No matter by what devious track
My image journeyed, there is fame
In that it has come surely back.

TO AUGUSTUS JOHN

*These, though my tankard is
Hung in the pantry
Up like Silenus's,
And from the chauntry
Only dry memories
Ring for the Muse:
From my indignities
Take, and excuse.*

WHEN you kept the gears in mesh
Driving on through Lettergesh,
And I kept not very far
Behind you in another car—
Not that I would cast a slur,
No; but accidents occur,
And your driving not your drawing
Was what there might be a flaw in—
Like a God a little cloud
Held you, as with speed endowed
You drove on through the divine
Light of day above the shine
Of the green and grapy sea,
Whose translucent greenery
Broke on crescent sands remote,
Goldener than Helen's throat.
For I never see a beach
Sloped within a galley's reach
But I think of sands afar
And our Lady of the War,

Wondering how many spears
Kept Love faithful for ten years;
And you think me just a fool
Of the sentimental school,
You who revel in the quick
And are Beauty's Bolshevik;
For you know how to undress
And expose her loveliness.

You are right, but I am wrong,
To love ladies named in song?
I who feel it like a duty
To love the rare and difficult Beauty
That danger never could forestall,
And towers round about it all.
What better than a far ideal
To help us with the near and real?

Well! you need not rail at me,
For you could not watch the sea,
Nor the purple mountains drawn
Like the neck of;
Nor the Hawk of Achill strung
Like a cross-bow as he hung
Half invisible in blue;
All these things were lost to you.
For your eyes were strictly glued
On (a Yeatsian rhyme) the road,
And the lake vibrating bright
Just six inches to your right;
And the goats so slow to fly

Till they looked you in the eye;
And the dogs still missed at home
That you "stood no nonsense from";
Geese that never more may tell
Who attempts their citadel—
Geese that fledged Augustus John
Till he seemed to be a swan,
Steering through the clear ozone
For a Leda of his own.
Or a Viking who has steered,
All blue eyes and yellow beard,
To some unawakened isle,
With a reassuring smile;
Or the lion-eyed Sordello
Mountain-met was just his fellow;
Or the gifted Robin Hood,
Driven from his sheltering wood.

Then we spread the things, Ah, me!
You but tolerated tea,
And the shallow lucubration
Of a picnic conversation;
Till—I hope I don't presume—
Suddenly profoundest gloom
Wrapped you as you gazed apart,
And not one of us had heart
To inquire what was the matter.
So we kept our frantic chatter
Up, to save an awful pause,
Guessing what could be the cause

Of your sudden, silent mood,
What in daylight made you brood.
Could it be that vapour islands
Made an "Evening in the Highlands"
With the mountains in array,
Or recalled "The Stag at Bay"
And the gulf that is betwixt
Those who hunt and hang it fixed?

Did your thoughts' unwelcome pageant
Bring, perchance, your London agent?
With his face and forehead numb,
Eyes like an aquarium?
Not by trifles such as these
Was your heart deprived of ease.

Enough! There is no need to tell
How I broke the gloomy spell,
What I was inspired to give—
By bread alone doth no man live,
And water makes a man depressed:
Maybe silence had been best.

*When my hawk's soul shall be
With little talk in her,
Trembling, about to flee,
And Father Falconer
Touches her off for me,
And I am gone—
All shall forgotten be
Save for you, John!*

TO THE POET W. B. YEATS,
WINNER OF THE NOBEL
PRIZE 1924

[To Build a Fountain to Commemorate His Victory]

Now that a town of the North
In which a discerning band
Has caused your name to go forth,
And lifted on high your hand
Before all men on the Earth
As a sign of a contest won;
What should you do with your wealth
But spill it in water and stone;
With a Dolphin to scatter the spilth,
To be for a sign when you're gone
That you in the town of your birth
Laboured and hewed at a cup
To hold what the clear sky spills;
Why should you not set it up
Under the granitic hills?
What did the Roman of old,
After the Pyrrhic slaughter,
But spend the hard-won gold
To bring in the Sabine water?
Gracious and bountiful men,
Cæsars and Cardinals,
Laid hold of the mountain treasure, and then
Spilt it within the walls,
For children to dabble and splash,

And break the bead at the brim;
For sparrows to shudder and wash,
And the Dolphin's freshet unlimn
The Dolphin under its wave
Till he seem to tumble and reel,
For his back to a poet he gave,
And he follows at Venus' heel;
He comes from the depths at a song:
O set him on high in his place;
For he stands for what flows in the lovely and
strong
And a sign of the Julian race!

BACK FROM THE COUNTRY

BACK from the country
Ruddy as an apple,
Looking ripe and rural
As the maid a farmer seeks;
Fresh as an apple
Shining in the pantry,
Back you came to Dublin
Whom I had not seen for weeks:
How I hid my laughter
Fearing to offend you,
Back from the country
With your apple cheeks!

PANURGE

[Emotional Humanity, the All-worker.
A Note on Rabelais]

DESIRE that drives where Lust obscures,
And Fear that wields a scourge,
These, as the Master dreamed, are yours,
Panurge.

Desire and Fear, the Masquers two,
Who act with us and urge
The Comedy we play with you,
Panurge.

Not since the most pellucid air
By the Illissus' verge
Heard the loud peals of laughter rare,
Panurge,

In lyric plenitude of joy,
Like Clouds whose rains asperge
The desiccations that destroy,
Panurge,

Such laughter-lore as this was taught
In which we mix and merge,
O profligate and polyglot
Panurge!

The meaning of the things we do:
Is Life a dance or dirge?
Depends upon the point of view,
Panurge!

How can we reach, though sail be bent
Beyond the horizon's verge,
Those isles of your astonishment,
Panurge?

Bring back the cannons' fearful crack;
Your fright and plight and purge;
The boar-cat Rodilardus, back
Panurge.

Bring back the fornicating Friar;
Let Sacred Strength resurge
And rehabilitate Desire,
Panurge!

CHORIC SONG OF THE LADIES OF LEMNOS

[The Lemnians having killed their husbands, faced with the necessity of defending the Island, resolve to press the crew of the Argo which carries Hercules into marriage.]

STR. I. WHO will marry Hercules?
 Tell me if you can.
 Who will catch his eye, and please
 The strong silent man?

 Who will make a happy home,
 For duty and desire:
 In Summer tend the honeycomb,
 In Winter tend the fire?

ANTIS. I. What exactly is the sense,
 And substance of your song?
 Is his strength in reticence;
 Or is he, silent, strong?

 Often strong and silent men,
 With sorra much to say,
 Are with young and old women
 Winsome in their way.

EPOS. I. 'Tis the great Tirynthian groom,
 A boyo hard to parry!
 Rather ask the question whom
 Hercules will marry.

STR. II. Thus to speak as if no choice
Were left is to disparage
Us, who surely have a voice,
And the half of marriage;
To put the cart before the horse,
The groom before the bride.
It is for the girl, of course,
Also to decide.

ANTIS. II. O look at him with his club,
And his lion's fell!
That's the lad who made the hub-
Bub below in Hell!
That which is the pirates' quest
May be Hercules's:
To carry off the buxomest,
And marry whom he pleases!

EPOS. II. Praise him for his shoulders' breadth,
Him who took the Town of Death,
Took the triple Dog therefrom,
And Alcestis to her home.
Praise him, for he carries through
All he sets himself to do;
No one ever saw him chuck
Anything he undertook;
Softly talk of marriage, he
Might embrace the colony;
And if he were duly roused
Who would then be unespoused?

“ÆTERNÆ LUCIS REDDITOR”

[*To Robert Yelverton Tyrrell*]

OLD Friend, long dead, who yet can thrive
More in my heart than men alive
Because in you the flame lived more
Than ever since the days of yore
When, everywhere that Rome was known,
The post-triumphal silence shone,
And in the vespertinal hush
The trumpet yielded to the thrush:
Because those days you could restore
Æternæ lucis Redditor.

You shared with us the mood serene
That ruled the universal scene
When Peace was guardian of the poor,
And only rusty was the door
Of Janus, and the pillared shade
Revealed the studious colonnade:
The toga with the purple hem,
The temple that with quiet flame
Acclaimed the distant Emperor,
Æternæ lucis Redditor.

Too seldom on this world of ours
Unwrackt the eternal radiance pours.
Again we shall not see it pour
As in the days and nights before

We lost the wide Virgilian calm;
Days when we sought to earn the palm—
Through the endowment of a wit
Which made us eligible for it—
From you who were Wit's arbiter,
Æternæ lucis Redditor.

'Twixt you and me and me and those
Irremeable the River flows
Since we beheld with joy and awe
The light by which blind Homer saw.
And not again in this our time
Shall sound magnanimous the rhyme;
The wolves have torn our pleasant folds,
And the Great Wall no longer holds.
But Love can bridge the Stygian shore,
Æternæ lucis Redditor.

L I M E S T O N E A N D W A T E R

THIS is the rock whose colours range
From bright to dark when wet with rain,
Clear as an eye whose colours change
From smoke-grey blue to dark again:
This is the limestone base of earth
From which the best things come to birth.

And the stream shallows where its walls'
Smooth steep, which ivy pennons coat,
Down from bare earth abruptly falls,
And stands as if it stood in a moat;
Above, a sapling shows its root:
The wild stream darkens the cliff foot.

Out of this rock the stone was smashed
That gave long beauty time to grow;
The hammers rang, the chisels flashed:
It answered back with fire the blow;
And it gave gifts and guards enough
From limestone to the Parian stuff.

Water and rock by warriors wed
Here with the landscape well accord.
They built beyond Time's ambushade,
Builders and wielders of chisel and sword.
So well they dealt with stone and stream
Eternity deals well with them.

And where the grey sky turns to white,
 Failing the limits of the land's
Far-shining girdle, dark, upright,
 The strong four-cornered tower stands;
And nearer, where the grey sky lowers,
The long green tunnels close on towers.

And here where Time has trampled down
 The white-thorn bush and blurred the track,
Up stands the steep unblunted stone
 And brings the lance-straight ladies back,
And lights again those eyes of theirs
As brave as glints from young men's spears.

For not a thing that ever grew
 To win Time's heart can Time forget:
With clouds he blends the lichens' hue;
 The mountains with the parapet;
And crowns that tower's denizen
Who had more than her share of men.

Wherever Life is made secure
 Beauty is gardened to become
As lovely as its walls are sure
 Foundations fit for Beauty's home.
And like long reaches, stilled by weirs,
So Loveliness wastes not with years.

The castle by the shallow ford:
In ruin, but the upright line
Above the tangle keeps its word:
In death the unbroken discipline!
And O, what great well-being went
To build the enduring battlement!

NEW BRIDGE

NEW Bridge is the oldest bridge
The Liffey passes through.
There must have been an older bridge
When this new bridge was new.
But, new or old, the water flows
In many a gleaming stage
As careless as a thing which goes
And is exempt from age.

So pleasant is it on this bank,
I often wonder why
They set the piers out rank on rank
And raised the arches high.
They must, deluded by a dream,
Have thought, as I have done:
The other side of any stream
Is better than your own.

The water bends and thickens as
It rushes at an arch.
The piers like soldiers in a pass
Stand halted on the march.
The hissing stream escapes to fall
In mocking undertones.
But would it be a stream at all,
Without the bridge and stones?

They built as men built who believed
In Life that lasts forever.
And hardly were those souls deceived
Who bridged the clear black river?
The soul survives, as any dunce
Can prove: for it is plain
That that which gets in trouble once
Shall troubled be again.

I'd rather hear these arches praised
Than arches anywhere.
Not those the Eternal City raised
To Settimo Severe;
Nor those that leave the walls therefrom
To tap the Sabine ridge
Can match these arches here at home
In Liffey's oldest bridge.

The black bright water over there
Is flaked beside the brink,
As if the stallions of Kildare
Had bent down necks to drink.
And underneath an arch I see
A long grey gleaming reach,
Half shadowed by a breeze, maybe,
Or, maybe, by a beech.

The long grey lines of steel are gone
Which crossed here long ago:

The colours, the caparison,
All gone; and I would go
But that I fear I might repent
My going, if I found
The side from which I willing went
Looked better from beyond.

I W O N D E R

I WONDER when will women know the glories they
suggest to us:

If I were fit to sing to them of all that they inspire,
Their dalliance to open up the Kingdom of the Blest
to us

Would still be no less graced than hers who had a
god to sire.

For queens they are, forgetful of the weight their
brows has belted,

No longer crowned above us all by aching diadems;
Some god put Lethe in the cup wherein the pearl was
melted;

And golden heads have still to hear that Troy
went down in flames.

It surely cannot be that I, alone of men, remember
The old mad grandeur and the days of glory gone
to waste;

Because here Beauty gleams as fair as boughs rimed
in December,

And witless wears the ribands for which helmets
were unlaced?

And yet they look as though none heard what for-
tresses were wrecked for them.

What armies squandered, for a smile, the sister of
all Force;

What waters turned to wells of wine when battle-
ments were decked for them:

O why should I that Past recall which makes the
Present worse?

It may be that our Present is for all the Past an
Hades;

A parody of Kings and Queens, and Bounty's
paradigm;

It may be Time's Magnificat must name no living
ladies;

It may be that Forgetfulness excels a poet's rhyme.

EUROPA AND THE BULL

[*To Arthur Train*]

"WHERE is little Wide Eyes?"
"Where but in the farmyard."
"Have I never told you
To be careful of the child?"
"Well, you would not think that
There she would come harmward,
If you saw the stallion tremble
When she pats him, and grow mild."

"Nurse, it's not of danger
From animals I'm thinking;
Rather of a fashion
Which of late has grown too rife:
Girls of county families,
Of men in my position,
With grooms are so familiar,
It's as bad as man and wife!

"And then there is this Never-to-be-
Too-much deprecated
Tendency towards bringing
Only daughters up as boys;
If the Queen were living,
She would never tolerate it. . . .
What's their masquerading
To the magic it destroys!"

“Well I know that queer things
Happen in the country:
Nothing could be queerer
Than a King to take his cue
From his subjects’ families,
Or pardon their effrontery
Who dared to tell his daughter
Or her Nannie what to do.”

“I, not unobservant,
Nurse, have noticed anger
Often used by women
Who were not irascible,
Out of mere resentment
When they could no longer
Argue a position
Which had proved untenable.

“If your speech is ended,
Listen, my good woman,
Nothing is achieved by
Incoherent talk:
Tell her that the country
Is an open farmyard,
Wide Eyes will go with you
And her maidens for a walk.

“Any distance inland
Needs the stoutest buskin,
Sandals are more suited
To the firmly sanded shore;

No matter where you go to,
Surely come by dusk in.
I trust we need not talk about
The farmyard any more."

* * * *

Dunes are here on this side,
There, that piny headland;
Midway, like a giant,
Is that landward-leaning tree,
Angry with the constant
Briny-blowing West Wind,
Poising up a shoulderstone
To cast it in the sea.

Do you see that wave there,
Where the crescent curves lift,
Transilluminating
For a second into green
Miles of crystal daylight,
Then, the hissing snowdrift:
Light so water-tangled
That its sightless self is seen—?

That is how the daylight,
Barely vespertinal,
Save but for a feeling
That a moon was very near,
Looked above the headland
Of the sandy, sinal

Crescent, while it waited
For a crescent in the air.

Taller than the tallest
Of her young companions,
Wide Eyes never wilted
Where the broken ground begins:
That's the Archer Goddess,
With her bosom belted!
No; it is a tomboy
With the scratches on her shins!

Certainly unconscious
That she was a maiden
Who could fill with banners
Frontiers of Kings!
Once you saw her swinging
From her youthful haunches,
You would feel that manners
Were not all-important things.

"If I raced you up there,
Which of you could whistle?
Just you watch me running
When I get my second wind."
Moulding in her short skirt
Limbs to jump the thistle,
A cry of wonder reached her
From the little group behind.

Gambolling and charging,
Low head shaken sideways,
Swerving as though guided
By his tassel rudder tail,
Snorting more than stamping
A ripple on the tideways,
A Bull, where nothing ever
Drew a furrow but a sail!

Eyes beneath a broad brow
Widen with amazement,
Not because the women
Who were with her ran away;
But because a bull used
Water for a pavement.
Down the fearless maiden went
To meet him at the Bay.

White as any Maytree
In the milky Maytime,
Clothed about her middle
With a dress as deep as haws,
On the beach she waited
In the silver of the daytime,
A blurred green moon above her
Like a May branch in the shaws.

Clear against the bright wall
Of the low horizon

On the bull came, prancing,
Lifting up his knees.
He came on as gaily
As a galley dancing
While its sail is being lowered
And the shouts are from the quays.

Like a man of Yorkshire
Grunting after Christmas,
When the curly foreheads
And the appetites convene,
White against the dark green
Pines along the isthmus;
He landed hardly wetted
By his gambols on the brine.

Beating Heart of Nature
What is it divorced us
From your mighty pulses
Throbbing into Sense!
Sorra much the Hermit,
Reason gives, who cursed us:
Even Love goes ebbing
From his deadly prescience!

Now he runs around her,
Now he stands before her,
Now his mighty breathings
Tighten up her clothes;

Now he runs around her,
Now he kneels before her,
Now she pulls her instep
From the spraying of his nose!

Who except a fool would
Think he knew the mental
Processes that act upon
A widow, wife or maid?
But the very sight of
Strength becoming gentle—
That is what they can't resist:
A married man has said.

Not the alabaster
Palaces of Minos
Ever held a better
Or a bull more quickly tamed:
Glancing coat half ruffled
Like a pool amid the spinous
Dells of Ida's island
For a hundred cities famed.

From his dewlap only
Drops of water trickled,
For she felt his back warm,
Silky-soft and dry,
And no common bull's hide!
For it never tickled,
When she held the strong beast
Tight with either thigh.

Maybe, had she noticed,
When she first went near him,
That he had no halter
Nor the ring he should have worn,
She might have cast about her
For another way to steer him:
Bulls are ill directed
When you take them by the horn.

Once he had her mounted,
Even had she willed it,
She could not have left him
While the sea was yet below,
But she held on lightly
To the garlands on the gilded
Horns, more blunt, but stronger
Than the horns of buffalo.

Some wondered was she laughing at
The bucketing and heaving
Bull who tried her courage
When he sent the waves aswirl;
Some wondered was she sorry for
The home that she was leaving:
All talk! They only wondered
What would happen to the girl!

Because the tales that suit me best
Are tales without a moral,

Like this—unless at Harmony
It hints in times afar,
Before with all creation
And ourselves we came to quarrel;
Before the animals found out
What animals we are.

Because I love the days in which
Such miracles were common,
Because I can suggest to you,
So sceptical of all,
(The mind provides the prodigy)
That many a horsey woman
Would welcome well such miracle
When riding for a fall—;

Because the thoughts I dwell upon
Would never pass a teacher
Who maintains the World was made
According to the word
Of men who separate Mankind
From Universal Nature—
For what eloping god to-day
Would turn into a Ford?

Because I hold an Age of Faith
Whose dogma is emphatic
Is happier than such as this
When, if there's faith about,

'Tis not in gods by girls transformed,
But Jewish mathematic,
I go for Truth to Beauty
Which is subject to less doubt.

So I see the White Bull
As the water yellowed
With the purple-vested
Girl upon his back,
Laughing when he dipt down,
Laughing when he bellowed,
Laughing when she dug her heels
To goad him on the track.

Peace instead of panic now
Where, long ago, erumpent
Through the trance of quiet
Of that farmstead with a roar—
Sand instead of cities since—
The Bull bore off triumphant
That sweet and self-made burden
From the blest Sidonian shore.

What about her father?
Formal proclamation
That it was her nurse's
Fault was no excuse
In the eyes of "County",
Nor a consolation;
But glory when the Church declared
His son-in-law was Zeus!

THRUSH IN ASH

BARE above the hedge, already
Thick with leaf, the leafless ash
Stands, resisting still the heady
Spring's excited sudden flash;
Like a deep reluctant lover
Whose still heart is slow to love,
But the more it takes to move her,
When she loves, the more she'll . . . Hush!
Coloured like his branchy cover,
Ash-eye speckled sits a thrush.
Lack of shelter little daunts him:
If the branches lack their green,
All the better may the mountains
Through the leafless boughs be seen.
You may count up five, or count tens
In between his fangled notes,
While the evening smooths the mountains
And on silence music floats:
Sweetly sudden knots in silence
Like the way a violet shows,
Interrupting green with sweetness
Presently its purple glows,
Like a drop of nectar taken
From the cup that Hebe spilt;
Dew fallen down from Ida, shaken
When great Hera kicked the quilt.
Lightly from the boughs ungreening
Floats the light and lyric cheer,

Just a voice that takes a meaning
From the place and those that hear.
And the silence feeds his whistling
As the evening lights the stars,
Or my ear my fancy, listening
To his interrupted bars.
O my fancy stop your straining
After subtile simile;
Listen to the curled flakes raining
From the song-bird in his tree;
Cease to taint with mortal dreaming
Such a liquid lovely song;
Now the evening air is creaming,
And the hills are smooth and long!
Like the mountains which the Magi
Seek beyond the starlit road
When the Tuscan mixes magic
On the painted oaken board,
And you see smooth light pervade all
Trees transfigured, leaves unstirred,
And the mountains to a cradle
Dwindle, cradling the Word.
Here the ash-tree with a trellis
Of its young boughs yet unblurred
Screens the golden dusty valleys
Stilled to hear the singing bird.
Music: silence: silence aching,
Till the few notes twisted clear,
Lovely thoughtless music making,
Lancinate the inmost ear;

Exquisitely thin and sweeter
Than the high sharp sickle moon,
Perfect, being incompleter
Than a promise past and blown,
Sounds that cease before enticing
Thoughts and fetters of the word;
Here is Sound for Song sufficing,
Leafless ash and singing bird.

APPLIED POETRY

ALL thoughts of you are joys
And wistful fun!
My heart is like a boy's,
What have you done?

For I can no more think
Of pounds and pence
Just now than I can think
With commonsense.

The leaves of forest glades
Where you are seen
Are still light yellow blades
Before their green;

Each soaking meadow pool
That's blurred with blue
To me, who am a fool,
The eyes of you!

The glistening breezes spilt
Through aspen tops
Where April kicks her quilt
Of buttercups

And makes the meadow sway
Its counterpane,—
As if Doll Tearsheet lay
And leapt again,

Are surely hints enough
That sweet and sure
Was he with "Youth's a stuff
Will not endure".

So let us find a bank. . . .
What's this? You won't?
You think I mean to rank—
Indeed I don't—

Doll Tearsheet with yourself,
My dear, you're dull!
How could a lanky elf
Suggest a trull?

But she was meant to show
(If Will gave lessons)
That only women know
The human essence,

And see beneath a part,
Though clothed upon
By Evil, the rich heart
Of gross Sir John;

Which no one else perceived.
When he was sickly,
Who was it for him grieved
But Doll and Quickly?

Significant and sad!
But each descendant
Of Adam, good or bad,
Is Eve's dependant.

We are a sorry race
Whose horoscope,
Uncast by Woman's grace,
Portends faint hope.

And now I find that he
Who stole and cheated,
Compared with honest me,
Was kindlier treated. . . .

You used to love the Bard.
Then more's the pity
That now you disregard
What's blithe and witty!

And play the Grandmamma,
Aloof, sedate:
"Our pleasant Willie, ah!
Is dead in you of late!"

There! there! I don't suggest
You are not fit to live
Up to the very best
That life in Art can give.

See, there's a bank that's fenced,
Wherein, whereon
Joy may be lodged against
Oblivion;

And we hereafter, say
That we of yore,
One slanting sunny day
Could do no more

Than make this gentle bank
Joy's strong redoubt
Which years may not outflank,
Nor Memory flout.

"Well, to accomplish that
What must we do?"
"We must do something pat,
Something Come-to."

Love can't be made by proxy,
Lest faith in Love should fail.
Heigh with the orthodoxy,
Come with me o'er the dale!

The only way to capture
What may not be expressed
Is turn it into rapture
Or turn it into jest.

So when you're old and fading,
A Christian Scientist,
Intent on self-persuading
That Evil can't exist

And I, for all my slimming,
Of somewhat stouter build,—
"To Rescue Fallen Women"—
Am Chairman of—The Guild. . . .

(My Dear, we can't eschew it,
For Fate is farcical.
The mighty poet knew it:
There's Falstaff in us all.)

When, after much persuasion,
In public we appear
To grace a State occasion,
Both you and I, my Dear,

Well honoured and respected,
We meet our troops of friends:
Since on the Undetected
Respect so much depends,

I'll give you formal greeting
And bow while whispering
This spell: "My pretty sweeting!"
To plunge our hearts in Spring;

For they, who hold together
Half shares in Love's secret,
Can conjure Spring, and tether
The years that bring regret.

SUB ILICE

Who will come with me to Italy in April?
Italy in April! The cherries on the hill!
The sudden gush of rivers where the valleys rib the mountains;
The blue-green mists, the silence which the mountain valleys
fill!

Is that Alba Longa? Yes; and there's Soracte.
Soracte? Yes; in Horace: don't you "vides ut", you fool?
No! She's not a model . . . you will have her husband on
us! . . .
Though her buttocks are far better than the Seven Hills of
Rome!

Cherries ripe and mountains! Young wives with the gait of
Goddesses; and feelings which you try in vain to say
To the gay vivacious calculating native;
If you knew Italian you would give the show away.

What is the attraction? Why are we delighted
When we meet the natives of a race that's not our own?
Is that which we like in them our ignorance about them;
And we feel so much the better where we know we are not
known?

Well, it does not matter. I am thinking of a stone-pine
Where an Empress had her villa on the great Flaminian Way;

And the blond Teutonic students who have come so far for
knowledge,
And the fräuleins who come with them on a reading holiday.

If I met a tall fair student girl from Dresden,
Whiter than a cream cheese, credulous, and O
Earnest, and so grateful for the things that I might teach her,
And I took her touring, would she have the sense to go?

I would through a ringlet, whisper . . . "This is Virgil's
Confiscated farmstead which his friend in Rome restored.
The Mastersinging races from the North came down here
merging;
And your hair was heir to colour that great Titian preferred.

How my pulses leap up! I can hardly curb them,
Visiting the places which a poet loved. . . . Ah, well!
Never fear the nightfall. . . . Veniemus urbem!
My friend can take our taxi and go look for an hotel."

Here between the last wave of the hills subsiding
And the river beeches which are growing bald with age,
Gentle as the land's rise, lofty and abiding,
Rhythm's mountain ranges rose to sunshine from his page.

" 'Is this Virgil's birthplace?' " Scholars are uncertain—
You cannot be a scholar if a thing is too well known—
There's the Idylls' ilex: if we use it for a curtain,
You can sit on half my raincoat and my half will be a throne.

"Virgil was Menalcas: let me call you Phyllis.
Now look up the Idyll where they tried what each could do:
There! 'Vis ergo inter nos', and 'turn about's', 'vicissim';
My pipe though not wax-jointed yet can play a tune or two."

* * * *

Friends, you must forgive me for this utter nonsense.
To-day I saw an ilex where the Dodder streels along;
And that togaed exile made me so despondent
That I called the light and glory which it shadows into song.

Thwart in the world I control are many seasons,
Many climes and characters obedient to a spell;
I turn to human grandeur's most exalted voice for reasons,
And not the least, that Virgil led a soul estranged from Hell.

NEW FORMS

I GATHERED marble Venus in my arms,
Just as the rabble crowded on the stair.
I said, For her the sea gave up its storms;
And gently on her body breathed the air.
Alas, she fell, and broke to many pieces:
Discovered later by a Professor,
He cried, "New forms, new forms!" And
wrote a thesis.

W O M E N

WOMEN are our subconscious selves,
Materialisations from our souls'
Regions where fairy queens and elves
Disport beyond Reason's controls.
Remember, if you call them fools
Who go, like dreams, by contraries,
That Spirits may scoff at earthly rules:
That you were born of one of these.
What else explains their vagaries
Unless this theory be truth,
That women are the Dryades
Of the lost orchards of our youth?

TO NINDE

O YOUNG and lovely! Now I'm left
With old ideals gone;
Bereft of power to praise, bereft
Of high comparison.

When Helen first put up her hair,
She may have looked like you;
Or Dian holding back a tear
When her first fawn she slew.

There's not a limb in Melian land,
Or veiled by Coan seas,
Which lissom chisel planed; or planned
By rapt Praxiteles,

To match you from your folded feet
To little lifted chin,
A line of perfect limbs which meet;
And not a beam gets in!

But when there is not for the eye
An equal in the heart,
The outer vision fades; so I,
To find your counterpart,

Call back the loveliness to aid
Which stars my world of song:
Ladies whom Time has lovelier made,
And think of them when young.

But what are planets when the bright
New crescent, tall and shy,
Tip-toes across the orchard light
Which tinges half the sky?

TO "APHRODITE"

VENUS I called you when our love began:
And I was right; and you Pandemian.

LEDA AND THE SWAN

THOUGH her Mother told her
Not to go a-bathing,
Leda loved the river
And she could not keep away:
Wading in its freshness
When the noon was heavy;
Walking by the water
At the close of day.

Where between its waterfalls,
Underneath the beeches,
Gently flows a broader
Hardly moving stream,
And the balanced trout lie
In the quiet reaches;
Taking all her clothes off,
Leda went to swim.

There was not a flag-leaf
By the river's margin
That might be a shelter
From a passer-by;
And a sudden whiteness
In the quiet darkness,
Let alone the splashing,
Was enough to catch an eye.

But the place was lonely,
And her clothes were hidden;

Even cattle walking
In the ford had gone away;
Every single farm-hand
Sleeping after dinner,—
What's the use of talking?
There was no one in the way.

In, without a stitch on,
Peaty water yielded,
Till her head was lifted
With its ropes of hair;
It was more surprising
Than a lily gilded
Just to see how golden
Was her body there:

Lolling in the water,
Lazily uplifting
Limbs that on the surface
Whitened into snow;
Leaning on the water,
Indolently drifting,
Hardly any faster
Than the foamy bubbles go.

You would say to see her
Swimming in the lonely
Pool, or after, dryer,
Putting on her clothes:

“O but she is lovely,
Not a soul to see her,
And how lovely only
Leda’s Mother knows!”

Under moving branches
Leisurely she dresses,
And the leafy sunlight
Made you wonder were
All its woven shadows
But her golden tresses,
Or a smock of sunlight
For her body bare.

When on earth great beauty
Goes exempt from danger,
It will be endangered
From a source on high;
When unearthly stillness
Falls on leaves, the ranger,
In his wood-lore anxious,
Gazes at the sky.

While her hair was drying,
Came a gentle languor,
Whether from the bathing
Or the breeze she didn’t know.
Anyway she lay there,
And her Mother’s anger

(Worse if she had wet hair)
 Could not make her dress and go.

Whitest of all earthly
 Things, the white that's rarest,
Is the snow on mountains
 Standing in the sun;
Next the clouds above them,
 Then the down is fairest
On the breast and pinions
 Of a proudly sailing swan.

And she saw him sailing
 On the pool where lately
She had stretched unnoticed,
 As she thought, and swum;
And she never wondered
 Why, erect and stately,
Where no river weed was
 Such a bird had come.

What was it she called him:
 Goosey-goosey gander?
For she knew no better
 Way to call a swan;
And the bird responding
 Seemed to understand her,
For he left his sailing
 For the bank to waddle on.

Apple blossoms under
Hills of Lacedæmon,
With the snow beyond them
In the still blue air,
To the swan who hid them
With his wings asunder,
Than the breasts of Leda,
Were not lovelier!

Of the tales that daughters
Tell their poor old mothers,
Which by all accounts are
Often very odd;
Leda's was a story
Stranger than all others.
What was there to say but:
Glory be to God?

And she half believed her,
For she knew her daughter;
And she saw the swan-down
Tangled in her hair.
Though she knew how deeply
Runs the stillest water;
How could she protect her
From the winged air?

Why is it effects are
Greater than their causes?

Why should causes often
Differ from effects?
Why should what is lovely
Fill the world with harness?
And the most deceived be
She who least suspects?

When the hyacinthine
Eggs were in the basket,—
Blue as at the whiteness
Where a cloud begins;
Who would dream there lay there
All that Trojan brightness;
Agamemnon murdered;
And the mighty Twins?

RELEASE

[*To Calypso*]

Not fixed is worship as I thought
When first your pride I faced,
But by some wonder heaven-wrought
May be at once displaced.

The heart to one ideal tied
May be released one day;
One day the Messenger, espied
Above Pieria,

Shall stoop; and, as he skims and dips—
Each sandal's golden fin
Fanning the violet water tips
To rainbows as they spin—

Come with the order from above;
And, like Odysseus, free,
I for a human-hearted love
Again shall risk the sea!

FAITHFUL EVEN UNTO FREUD

EVEN judged by dreams which are
But phantasmal parodies
Of my life; and hollower
Than the glory of the skies
Which the seven maids maintain,
Heavenly sisters of the rain,

I am true. If you came in
To the Liberties of Sleep
Where, as proud as Saladin,
A preposterous state I keep:
Would you ever guess each bride
Was your own self multiplied?

Where, by water-lilies stilled,
Some forgotten old canal
Mirrors deep a window-silled
Maiden in a castle wall,
You again: but no disguise
Warms your willow-greenish eyes.

To a place where engineers
Coax a stream to climb a hill
And in marble reappears
Mountain-melted snowy still
Water, as before the Moor
Laid it on his rose-leaf floor,

I am banished beyond time,
To my faith an infidel,
Ruling in another clime
Devotees who serve me well,
Moving as they seek my love
Hips that like twin melons move.

With my boat's three-cornered sail
Shaped as is a rose's thorn,
While the morning yet is pale,
Gently filling, I am borne,
Where . . . it is not every man's
Luck to meet Corinthians.

Aphrodite's house is there;
She knows what you drove me to.
The most pleasant form of prayer
That a worshipper can do
Was enjoined. But nothing cures
Love the loved one still abjures.

D O M I

THIS is the house where I lie down
At length to call the world my own;
And no one spies on what goes on.

This is the house that cannot yield:
Who built it knew well how to build.
None trespasses across my field;

Nor comes betimes because he thought,
If late, I might be up and out;
Here I am safe from fools like that.

The light is not as, shall we say,
The diamond dome above the Bay
When light looks black at topmost day;

Nor such as, ere the sun is set,
Shines level where the boughs are wet,
And it is early April yet.

No, I acknowledge it is dim;
But all the more tempered for him
Who has seen all that life could limn.

Before I took this holiday,
I often heard companions say:
"I would that I were well away".

And well away from all turmoil,
And well away from all the coil
Of anxious engaging toil.

Tiber and Nile and Thames of course
Raise lordlier walls to men of force:
But this becomes a man of verse.

You must not judge by my retreat
That I found Life not wildly sweet,
Or that I turn my back to it.

'Twas pleasant as I saw it played.
But why should one whose looks grow staid
Hang on unto the harlequinade?

It needs no skill to be prepared
For the long solitude unshared:
Hither my old grandmother fared.

TO EDWARD MORETON DRAX
18TH BARON DUNSANY

*To ward off Time's abuses
The name is set above,
By one who loves the Muses,
Of one the Muses love.*

FAREWELL TO THE PRINCESS

I WHO had your love
Have now my pride;
And that is worthy of
All love denied.
Times change; but long ago
Men stood no suffering
That came from one alone.
I heard a poet sing;
And I make bold
To say 'Twould take a crowd
Of such as you
To bring me down,
I am so proud:
And if you multiply
New loves, so I.
He declared it took
Two fans in double yoke
To moider one,
Two fans, before his broke;
And three shy fans before
The man who studied war,
The Mandarin
Of T'sow gave in;
And twenty ladies to undo
The Duke of Ting,
The Lord of Lu.

A L A S !

I LOST my Love,
I lost my Love
Because she came too rich to me.
How could I dream
Her need was of
A love as rich again from me?

And now her dear
Dark eyes light up;
Her-hands caress another's hair.
For me there is
Not any hope;
But thoughts that, O,
Enrich Despair!

TO JAMES STEPHENS

WHERE are you, Spirit, who could pass into our
hearts and all

Hearts of little children, hearts of trees and hills, and
elves?

Where is the pen that could, sweetly deep and
whimsical,

Make old poets sing again far better than themselves?

You passed through all our past worst time, and
proved yourself no caitiff.

America then listened to a voice too dear for wealth;
Then you went to London, where I fear you have
"gone native";

Too long in a metropolis will tax a poet's health:

It's not as if you had no wit, and cared for recogni-
tion;

A mind that lit the Liffey could emblazon all the
Thames,

But we're not ourselves without you, and we long for
coalition;

Oh, half of Erin's energy! What can have happened,
James?

AND SO ON

Was there ever Beauty yet
Time forgot to counteract?
If by Sorrow unbeset,
Did her city go unsacked;
Nor some accident disguise
The Immortals' jealousies?

Beauty never comes on earth
But an equal Grief is born;
Hidden, maybe, in the dearth
Of the hours ere the morn;
Or that in her core are strife,
Gain of Love and loss of Life.

This is nothing new at all:
We have heard it all before:
Beauty one side of the Wall,
On the other side, the War.
Love and Death; and no denying
These things do not end by dying.

DEATH MAY BE VERY GENTLE

DEATH may be very gentle after all:
He turns his face away from arrogant knights
Who fling themselves against him in their fights;
But to the loveliest he loves to call.
And he has with him those whose ways were mild
And beautiful; and many a little child.

TO SHADU 'L - MULK
[Delight of the Kingdom]
from the Persian of Khalil Shah

My Loved One has another
And a nameless paramour
Which causes me no bother,
For she loves me all the more.

Thus for the dam's rebellion
The ostlers often try her
With a jackass, till the stallion
Strikes the cobbles into fire.

CONNEMARA

West of the Shannon may be said
Whatever comes into your head;
But you can do, and chance your luck,
Whatever you like West of the Suck.

There's something sleeping in my breast
That wakens only in the West;
There's something in the core of me
That needs the West to set it free.

And I can see that river flow
Beside the town of Ballinasloe
To bound a country that is worth
The half of Heaven, the whole of Earth.

It opens out above the town
To make an island of its own;
And in between its sky-blue arms
The grass is green as any farm's.

As often as I take the road
Beyond the Suck, I wish to God
That it were but a one-way track
Which I might take and not come back.

The very light above the bay,
The mountains leaping far away,
Are hands that wave through homely air,
To make me shout "I'll soon be there!"

It is not everyone gets on
Where dwell the Seaside Sons of Conn;
It is not everyone that's wanted
Where things are apt to be enchanted:

Where you may see if you look out
The hills and clouds tumbling about;
But suddenly the fun may stop
Until they find to what you're up.

You are supposed to understand
What brings the sea so far inland;
And why the water-lilies be
Close to the gold weed of the sea.

You must not ask what kind of light
Was in the valleys half the night,
Now that you are beyond Beyonds
Where night and day were tied by bonds.

And if you see with half an eye
Two lovers meet, O pass them by!
Remember that the Others' do
As you have done by them to you.

And never ask the rights or wrongs
When mountains shake with battle-songs;
Because the Fight surpasses far
The things which merely lead to war.

The light is thronged as is the dark;
But here the wise make no remark:
For if it comes to comments on
The glory, then the prime is done.

The lanes that end on hill or strand
Of this, the Many Coloured Land,
Are dearer than the burdened roads
That cross the Lands of Many Loads.

It's here that I get out to walk;
The Shannon's there for you that talk;
But I can only work my will
Where mountains leap and clouds lie still.

P R A I S E

Why should I hold my praise
To wait for better days?
The best of times is now;
And this is good enough:
For Youth is at its best,
Youngest and loveliest,
Full of the sapling stuff;
And so are you.

We shall not in the flesh
Ever again be as fresh,
With courage quite so stout.
Never shall I surprise,
Never with more delight,
The little mist of light
As if your soul shone out
Before your eyes.

Roses and snow betoken
Your words before they're spoken;
Nothing can be more small,
Nothing more fair unless
The smile that makes them glisten . . .
O bear with me and listen!
The fact remains for all
Your humbleness!

The poplar never stoops,
The gentle willow droops,
Your walk holds both of these.
The movement of your hips
Has so much buoyance in it . . .
"Be silent!" Just a minute . . .
It makes me think of ships
Upon far seas.

Now let me have my say
In my own lyric way;
And then you may not frown.
My song is half a ruse
To praise myself in you,
Silence would never do,
It cost a man his Muse
When Rome went down.

Never shall it be said
Of me when I am dead:
He had too tardy sense
Of Beauty. Though your frowns
Are all my thanks, I tried
To sing of lovely pride;
There are no laurel crowns
For reticence!

GOOD LUCK

APPLES of gold the Hero dropt
As he was in the race outstript;
And Atalanta, running, stopt,
And all her lovely body dipt
A moment; but she lost her stride—
And had to go to bed a bride.

And was it not a cordial strong,
By which the young Iseult was filled
With passion for a whole life long;
For that was what the juice instilled?
So he who kept the unwitting tryst
Was sure of love before he kissed.

But where can I get Western gold,
Or posset of constraining fire?—
I who am fated to behold
Beauty outdistancing desire?
Aye, and to falter wonder-struck;
There's no good love without good luck!

THE CASTING

I POUR in the mould of rhyme
All that my heart would hold:
The transient light on the tower,
The moat in its wintry gold,
Sunlight, and a passing shower,
The gleam of your garments' fold
That baffles the eye as you pass,
Formless and lovely things
Like speech that breaks in a laugh;
To leave them a shape with wings,
And Time but a cenotaph.
I heat them with more than heat,
Because they must glow in the cold;
I puddle the white-hot mass,
And praying with words retold,
To temper Beauty from Time,
I pour them into the mould.

THE OAK WOOD

You could not see a linnet's wing
Between the oaks that wait for Spring,
Because the air is green and dim
With mosses on each bole and limb.

But soon they'll tingle in the blue
And all their amber joy renew;
And transubstantiate to wood
The Spring's impalpable blue blood.

And they will drain, ere time be past,
From Beauty gall to make them last
To gaze on many a festive sight:
The wedded heir, the ruddy light.

DUNSANY CASTLE

THE twin dunes rise before it, and beneath
Their tree-dark summits the Skene river flows,
An old divine earth exaltation glows
About it, though no longer battles breathe.
For Time puts all men's swords in his red sheath,
And softer now the air from Tara glows;
Thus in the royallest ground that Ireland knows
Stands your sheer house in immemorial Meath.

It stands for actions done and days endured;
Old causes God, in guiding Time, espoused
Who never brooks the undeserving long.
I found there pleasant chambers filled with song,
(And never were the Muses better housed)
Repose and dignity and Fame assured.

DEDICATION

TALL unpopular men,
Slim proud women who move
As women walked in the islands when
Temples were built to Love.
I sing to you. With you
Beauty at best can live,
Beauty that dwells with the rare and few,
Cold and imperative.
He who had Cæsar's ear
Sang to the lonely and strong.
Virgil made an austere
Venus Muse of his song.

COLOPHON

WHILE the Tragedy's afoot,
Let us play in the high boot;
Once the trumpets' notes are gone,
Off, before the Fool comes on!

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